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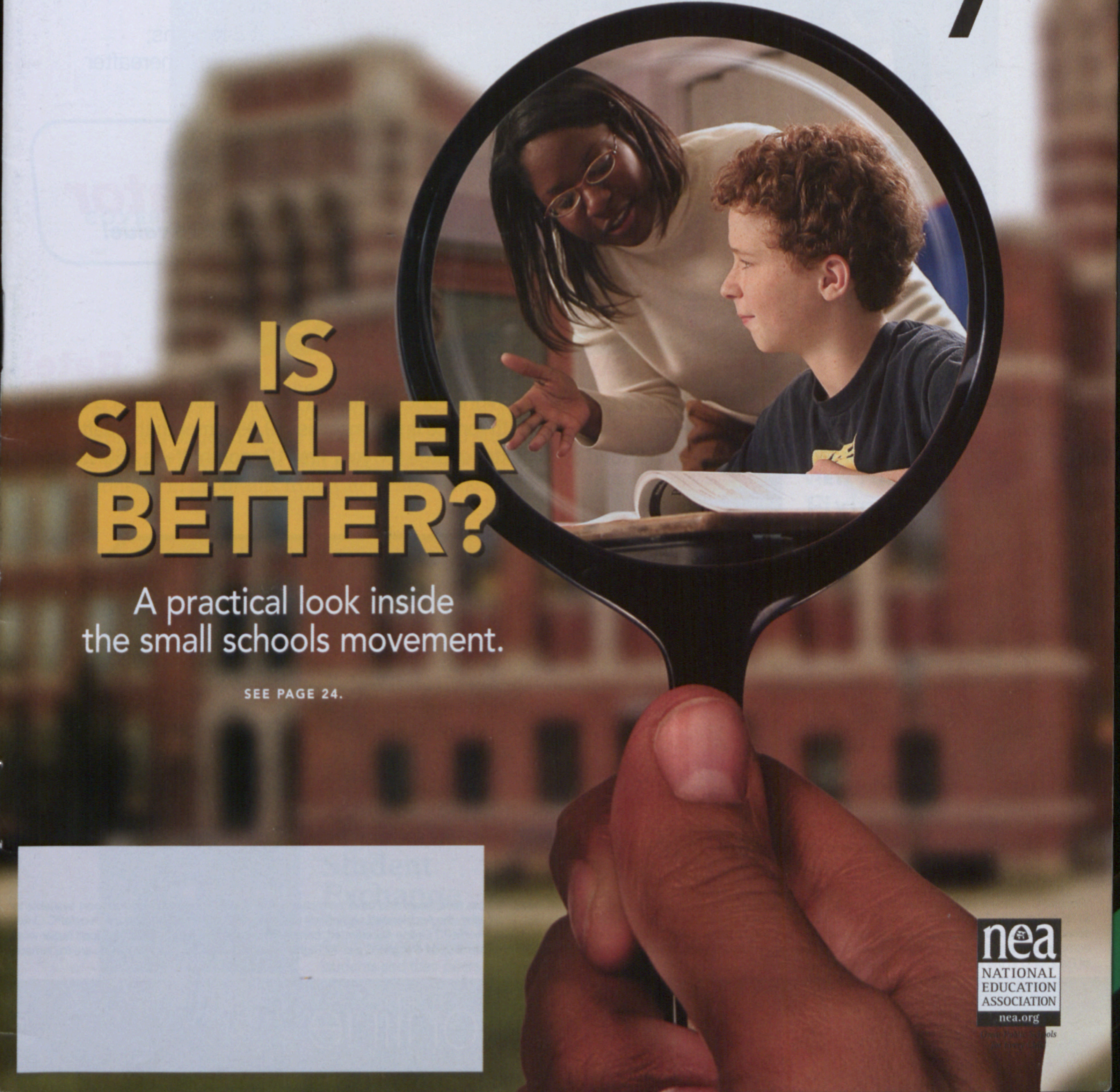

IS SMALLER BETTER?

A practical look inside the small schools movement.

SEE PAGE 24.

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- Spread the word.

For more details visit www.nea.org/readacross.

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Neenah, WI

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Ithaca, MI

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Homer, AK

William Barton Rogers Middle School
Boston, MA

Tune In

Like music? Then maybe you have an iPod, which topped the buying charts this past holiday season. One made its way to my house, and after a mere two days of reconfiguring my computer, I actually loaded a song onto it. Never (ever) have I been so happy to hear Hilary Duff. Or was it Lindsay Lohan? Yes, the iPod was from me, not to me. ¶ We all have gift stories, and judging from how many of you have checked out *NEA Today*'s November piece "Gift-A-Rama" on the Web, educators have fabulous tales and love to share them. An impressive array of items—from treasured baby blankets to, well, mice skeletons—have been put under wraps over the years. ¶ We've enjoyed the follow-up stories readers have sent in. Go to www.nea.org/neatoday/0511/gifts.html to tell us more and read what others have to say. ¶ In fact, while you're at nea.org, leave the holidays behind and think…Academy Awards. Or rather, who've been the best silver screen educators? You can vote at www.nea.org/neatoday/ballot.html. ¶ On nea.org, the Members and Educators area offers fun items like these, as well as more practical professional development resources and lesson plans. *NEA Today* will increasingly point you to the latest and greatest on the site. So stay tuned, and let us know what you as an educator would find most useful on the Web.

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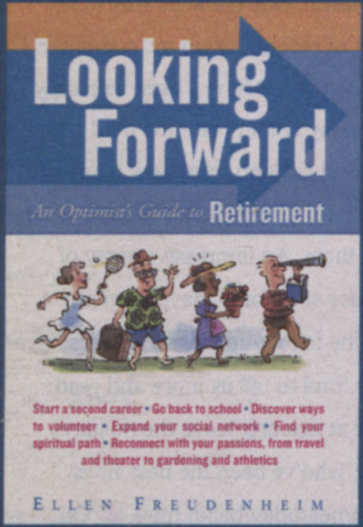
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Great Public Schools for Every Child

Sharing Our Enthusiasm for Reading

I have always believed that attitudes aren't taught, they're caught. If an adult shares her enthusiasm for reading with a child, then that child catches it, and becomes an enthusiastic reader too.

And it's that time of year again. The Cat in the Hat hats are being brushed off. The recommended reading lists are being prepped. And the celebrity readers are being rounded up. NEA's Read Across America is coming!

On Dr. Seuss's birthday, March 2, NEA will celebrate reading nationwide—for the ninth straight year. This year for Read Across America, NEA has a special mission, leading a national book drive for Gulf Coast schools devastated by the recent hurricanes. NEA and its Read Across America partner organizations will raise funds and collect books for schools severely impacted by the hurricanes, and NEA leaders will visit the Gulf Coast during Read Across week. You'll find more information at www.nea.org/readacross.

NEA's Read Across America is all about our sharing our enthusiasm for reading with kids. And NEA's Read Across America is ever-evolving! Read Across America is no longer a one day celebration, but a yearlong event that helps teachers, education support professionals, and parents help children and students become enthusiastic and skilled readers. We now make available a trove of reading materials you can use when connecting with students, families, and communities, whatever day it might be. Check out www.nea.org/readacross.

"NEA sees improved reading as essential to closing the achievement gaps.... Children must learn to read so that they can read to learn."

—REG WEAVER

NEA also has joined forces with Youth Service America to create Youth Leaders for Literacy. We're awarding 20 grants of $500 each to student-led reading initiatives, tapping into the creativity and enthusiasm of students.

Clearly, Team NEA is not resting. We are not standing still. Promoting reading is a constant challenge. These days books must compete with television, videogames, and iPods for children's attention. And while you, our members, tell us that progress has been made in improving the reading prowess of the nation's K–12 students, the advance has been too slow to satisfy you. Our students can and will do better.

NEA sees improved reading as essential to closing the achievement gaps among certain groups of students. Children must learn to read so that they can read to learn. Some children start the first grade knowing how to read. But other children come to school not even knowing the alphabet or how to write their names. These children begin on unequal footing. And it is difficult to correct the inequity. As the National Academy of Sciences noted in its report *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*: "Research consistently shows that children who get off to a good start in reading rarely stumble. Those who fall behind tend to stay behind for the rest of their academic lives."

NEA wants to see every child starting the first grade not only raring to go, but ready to go. Parents play a vital role in this, of course. Parents who read regularly to their child, starting at a very early age, and discuss with the child what they've read, prime their child for school and a lifetime of learning.

What's more, research shows that children who attend preschool and kindergarten, taught by certified professionals, are far more likely to be ready for first grade than those who do not. Every child in America should have access to free preschool and kindergarten.

NEA also wants to see that the children who fall behind in reading get the remedial help they need, even if they are in middle school or high school. We believe every child and young person can learn to read and read well—and we cannot be accepting of even one student leaving high school without being fully and functionally literate.

Make no mistake about it, Team NEA is the number one enthusiast for reading in America—and Read Across America 2006 will be the best one yet!

Reg Weaver

NEA PRESIDENT REG WEAVER

PHOTO: SCOTT ISKOWITZ

TALKBACK

SAY WHAT?

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425 First Languages

That's what 5 million students bring to U.S. classrooms.

Thirteen years ago, while teaching third grade, I learned that a new student, fresh from a Russian orphanage, would be entering my class. I tried to prepare the others, explaining that their new classmate didn't understand any English nor had he been exposed to many things they took for granted, like Crayons. I also contacted a friend who taught French and asked her to speak to my class—but only in French. It took just minutes for the students to turn to me and ask what she was saying. I told them I didn't know. The class then reminded me it was time for their spelling test (that was a first!) But, within a short time, a student got up and went to the world map, pointed to France and said our visitor's name, and then pointed to the United States and said his own name. That was when my 20 students began to realize what the new student would be going through, and what they needed to do to help him understand.

KATHRYN SARDELLA
Brockton, Massachusetts

I was pleased to read "Language Can't Be a Barrier," (cover story, January) regarding the need for support in teaching English to the many new English-language learners. I agree that role-playing can play a major part in teaching the language, and I suggest my colleagues try Aesop's Fables in their role-playing activities. The fables are of universal interest and short. They lend themselves to various voice interpretations and also require few props. The lines themselves are very much the sum and substance of role-playing.

JAMES R. MURRELL
Beaverton, Oregon

I'd like to praise you for your article on ELL students, but I'd also like to point out that I didn't see much of what middle and high school students face when they enter school here and are required to satisfy the same requirements as their "native" peers. In our county, we've tried to implement technology in our program. We were one of the first to introduce an online/interactive ESL class that broadcasted to the three high schools in the county. I am the ESL teacher for two high schools, three middle schools, and one alternative school. Lots of work, but it's worthy.

CORICHI JIMENEZGARRIDO
Kinston, North Carolina

We started out trying to identify what we taught: English as a second language, English for speakers of other languages. Now we identify those we teach: English-language learners. This is not an improvement. All students learn English, for all 12 years right up until graduation. I should know; it's the subject I taught for 34 years.

ROBERT S. PINGREE
Concord, New Hampshire

In 1972, as a high school senior, I was allowed to tutor at the local elementary school, where I was assigned to teach a 10-year-old Japanese girl to read. She spoke no English and I spoke no Japanese. Our resounding success was more due to her amazing acuity and my good intent than to any special technique. The experience is likely what led me to become a teacher.

SANDY BURRIS
Oxnard, California

GIFTED EDUCATION

I hope more articles highlighting the needs of gifted children ("Beautiful Minds," January) will be printed in *NEA Today*. Having a gifted child who suffered too much through a school system without a gifted program, I thank you for at least broaching the subject. I'd like to hear more.

GARY WILSON
North East, Maryland

LUNCHING ALONE

The debate in the January issue ("Should teachers eat lunch with their students?") was potentially appetizing but left me with a bad aftertaste. While I agree no teacher should be forced to compromise their lunch breaks, I see nothing wrong with voluntarily spending lunch with my own kids. For me, it's an opportunity to have positive interaction with my students that helps me to connect to them.

This is no different than lunches that I had with clients back when I sold news advertisements. If a simple gesture can help my dealings with others, I am happy to make it.

JOHN L. MEEKS JR.
Jacksonville, Florida

CYBER-COMMENTARY

A LIVING WAGE?

The only priority above my day-to-day interactions with the 180 students who walk through my class doorway each day is my family.... Financially, it has been an immense struggle for a family of four to live on $55K annually. I have had to take on additional responsibilities at school and find side jobs just to make ends meet.

From: www.ahistoryteacher.com

LEAVE THE TEACHING TO US

So what *do* I want, if not money? It's simple: Shut up and let us do our jobs.

From: http://folkbum.blogspot.com/2005/11/wages-of-teaching.html.

WANT TO WEIGH IN?

Chat with your colleagues on NEA's discussion boards at **www.neatoday.org/talkback.html**.

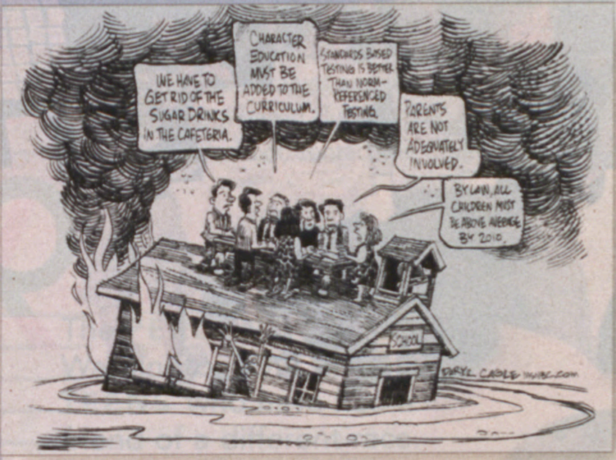
I knew immediately that Ms. Townsend (who argued in favor of lunch with students) could not possibly be an elementary school teacher. I have been asked several times to eat lunch with my class at the beginning of each school year to help them "acclimate." This, of course, is in direct opposition to our duty-free lunch legislation, but we do it for a few days anyway. I am no longer "Mrs. Lawrence," but "Mommy," as in, "Please open this container, peel this banana," etc. There are much better opportunities to get to know students, such as recess.

LAURIE ANN LAWRENCE
Stockbridge, Georgia

MEMBER IN THE NEWS

"UTAH TEACHERS ARE USED TO schoolyard bullies. They never have impressed us. They never will frighten us. They certainly won't silence us."

NEA SECRETARY-TREASURER LILY ESKELSEN, *in response to criticism that teachers' associations shouldn't be involved in politics,* The Daily Herald, *December 6, 2005.*


WE HAVE TO GET RID OF THE SUGAR DRINKS IN THE CAFETERIA.
CHARACTER EDUCATION MUST BE ADDED TO THE CURRICULUM.
STANDARDS BASED TESTING IS BETTER THAN NORM-REFERENCED TESTING.
PARENTS ARE NOT ADEQUATELY INVOLVED.
BY LAW, ALL CHILDREN MUST BE ABOVE AVERAGE BY 2010.
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DARYL CAGLE msnbc.com

HISTORY LESSONS

I very much enjoyed "Answering the Call: The History of the National Education Association," in January and am especially pleased to know it's only the first. I look forward to the coming articles.

TODD LEVY
Old Saybrook, Connecticut

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Your diversity calendar (Resources) is great, but I was disappointed with the "Chinese New Year" in the January calendar.

I am a Vietnamese person who celebrates that day, and many additional countries celebrate this event as well. With that in mind, a lot of people use the term "Lunar New Year" instead. That way, children who are not Chinese but celebrate this New Year can feel connected and proud.

EMERALD QUACH
Seattle, Washington

GIFTS GALORE

Perhaps some teachers don't want to see mugs or gifts from The Body Shop, but I hope students did not read the article ("Gift-A-Rama," November), as they might not have understood the humor. Instead, students should know that most teachers treasure every gift. Years ago, when I was a student teacher at an urban school in North Philadelphia, my students collected money to give me towels as a wedding gift. For 35 years I have kept them in a safe place, without using them, to remind me of my first group of special students.

IDA R. MARGOLIS
Northfield, New Jersey

LET'S TALK

Share your ideas, comments, and opinions with *NEA Today* in one of four ways:

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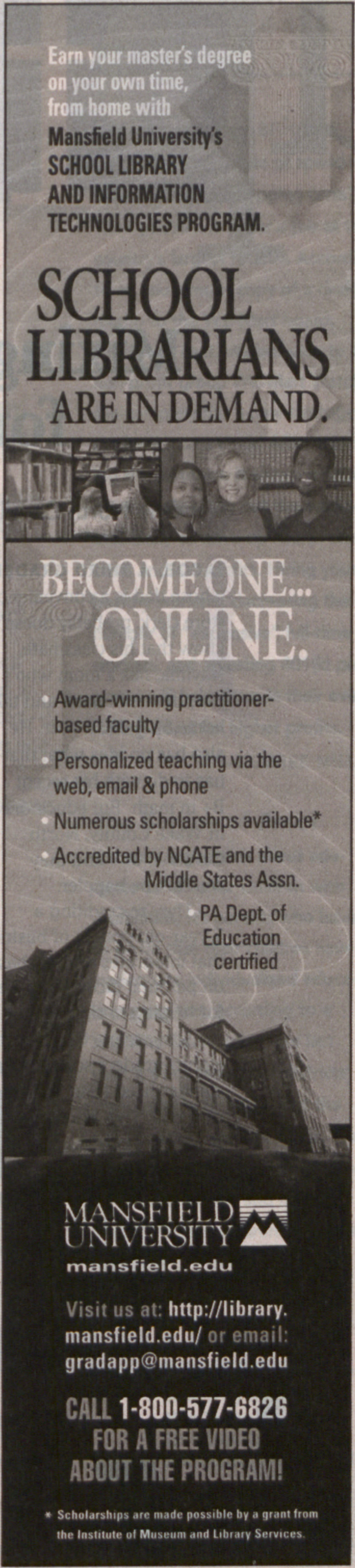
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upfront

Trends
Facts
Innovators
Wisdom
Research
First 5
News
Quotes
Humor

Mixing Wealth for Academic Health

One North Carolina county sees scores jump with economic shake up.

JACOB, A THIRD GRADER whose dad is a convenience store clerk, probably doesn't know that his classmate, Nayima, has a mom who's the president of a bank and takes home $125,000 a year. He also has no idea what that has to do with his recent B+ in math. But educators in Wake County, North Carolina, do—and they couldn't be happier.

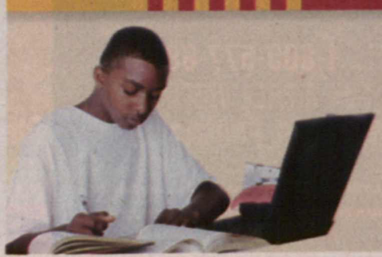
They're crediting a 5-year-old system of busing that integrates schools based on parental income—rather than race—for helping to significantly boost test scores.

Last spring, 80 percent of Black third- through eighth-graders scored at grade level on the state's standardized tests. A decade earlier, only 40 percent had. This evidence of economic integration's benefits comes at a key time for Wake County. Twenty-seven percent of the students there are poor, up from 20 percent in 1998.

But these results aren't surprising to many researchers. Decades' worth of evidence suggests that exposing kids at all economic levels to middle class educational values provides a better learning environment for all, says Richard Kahlenberg of The Century Foundation, a New York-based nonprofit that touts economic diversity in schools.

"You want an environment in which peers are highly motivated and have big dreams and whose parents are very involved in their education," says Kahlenberg.

THE DIGITAL DIVIDE



Students with home computers are 6 to 8 percentage points more likely to graduate from high school, says a new University of California, Santa Cruz, study. That's bad news for Black and Latino students: About 50 percent of them have access to home computers, compared with 75 percent of White students.

PHOTO TOP: NATHAN HAM; PHOTO BOTTOM: CORBIS

NOT your Grandmother's Knitting Club

When program specialist Judith Symonds began knitting in the hallways of her Maplewood, New Jersey, elementary school, she unwittingly hooked into a new trend.

AFTER SEEING her clicking away, both boys and girls clamored to pick up needles of their own, so Symonds stitched together an after-school program for parents and students called Knitting Together a Community. As activities go, this one is cheap and portable, and Symonds has found it helps parents weave common ground with their children. At the same time, it also helps students learn to focus on tasks at hand.

Symonds' school, the Seth Boyden Demonstration School, isn't the only place this classic pastime is catching on. Students of all ages are wrapping themselves in handmade scarves and mittens—just like Julia Roberts and other celebrity knitters—as school-based clubs pop up across the country. For information about starting one at your school, contact the Craft Yarn Council at www.craftyarncouncil.com.

—MARY ROBBINS

7

[STATISTIC]

The **PERCENTAGE** of Washington, D.C., area **TEENS** who have had a friend of a different race.

SOURCE: THE WASHINGTON POST

The Language of Love

Remember when star-crossed teens professed their love in poetry? "What light through yonder window breaks? It is the east, and Juliet is the sun," said love-struck Romeo.

This Valentine's Day, as modern love notes are sent via cell phones and instant messages, check out our hip and handy glossary to adolescent love speak:

143 is "I love you." (Get it? One letter, then four, then three.)

14324*7 is "I love you 24 hours seven days a week."

ILUVUMED is "I love you MY EDUCATOR!" (Well, not really, though it should be! It's "I love you more each day.")

ILUWAMH is "I love you with all my heart."

IBCNU is "I'll be seeing you."

And, one to avoid, **IH8U**—"I hate you!"

Notepad

Wal-Mart Shenanigans

Can't lift heavy boxes or spend hours wrangling shopping carts? Then you're not fit for a job at the country's largest retailer. According to an anonymous copy of a draft memo to the Wal-Mart board, which was sent late last year to the non-profit group Wal-Mart Watch, the company has a new strategy to cut health care costs. After crunching the numbers, it seems it comes down to weeding out the associates likely to drive up health care costs and eat profits. Hiring young, healthy workers, decreasing the number of "expensive" full-time workers, and adjusting 401(k) programs will help them in their everlasting quest for higher profits.

—DESIREE MILLER

The Burden of Proof

If there's a question about adequate services for children with disabilities, it's parents who have to prove that their children have inadequate individualized education programs, according to a Supreme Court ruling late last year. It's not the school districts' responsibility to prove that the child's needs have been met. The ruling could create a change in policy in many states, and make it more difficult for parents with few resources to mount challenges.

Have a great idea?

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PHOTO TOP: CORBIS; PHOTO BOTTOM: NANCY HONEY

Going Home

Visiting students at home can help you at school.

YOUR STUDENTS spend hours every day at school with you, on your turf, but how much time do you spend in their neighborhood on theirs?

If the answer is very little, that's a mistake, says Carmen Mercado, an education professor at Hunter College and the City University of New York. For more than 20 years, Mercado has encouraged teachers to visit their students' homes to identify intellectual resources that can be applied to school curriculum.

Too often, teachers assume their students—especially poor and minority ones—don't have resources at home for learning. They do, Mercado says. And knowing what they are can promote "culturally responsive teaching," as well as infuse your students with a sense of confidence and dignity.

"For example, many students lead trans-national lives, going to and from Puerto Rico in some cases. This is a tremendous resource," says Mercado. "A teacher can go into a Puerto Rican home and observe the student's language skills, knowledge of religion or art or history, and then connect that back to the curriculum."

Carmen Mercado, Hunter College, City University of New York

1

[STATISTIC]

The average number of **STUDENTS** per **TEACHER** in Denmark.

SOURCE: EL BAROMETER, 2004

WHAT WERE THEY THINKING?

Poor Jimmy Hopkins. Bullies push him around at school until he just can't take it anymore, and he lashes back—getting into fights, pushing heads into toilets, and taunting his classmates with abandon. (He even hits teachers!) That's the premise of *Bully*, a new video game by Rockstar Games, a subsidiary of Take-Two Interactive Software, due out this spring. How cool is that? Not very.

PHOTOS TOP: RYAN MCVAY AND C. LOPEZ; PHOTO BOTTOM: DIGITAL VISION

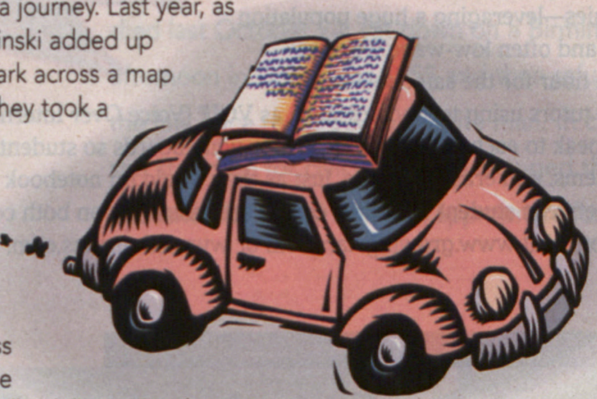
It's time for a road trip!

READ ACROSS AMERICA
AN NEA PROJECT

READING ACROSS AMERICA

IT WAS SEPTEMBER 1805 when Lewis and Clark ran out of food in the Bitterroot Mountains, butchered their horse for dinner, and sadly named a nearby stream, "Hungry Creek." Surely they thought they would die. But exactly 200 years later, the students at Timber Ridge Middle School in Plainfield, Illinois, reading about the adventurers' journey, gave them some help.

John Piechocinski, Timber Ridge's head custodian, leads an annual NEA's Read Across America program in which students count the pages they've read as miles in a journey. Last year, as they added up pages, Piechocinski added up miles and moved Lewis and Clark across a map in a school hallway. One year, they took a virtual trip to every ballpark in America. "We get parents involved, the community involved, and the kids really enjoy it," says Piechocinski.



This year, NEA's Read Across America, a yearlong, nationwide initiative to promote reading, will celebrate Read Across America Day on March 2. For more information, book lists, and resources to use in the classroom, go to www.nea.org/readacross.

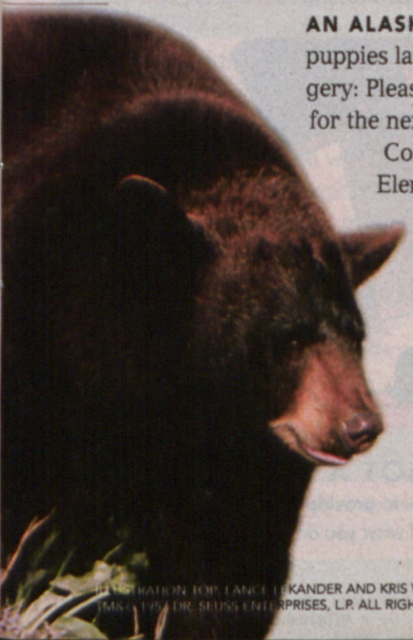
ALWAYS ON HER MIND

THAT'S DEDICATION!

AN ALASKA TEACHER, mauled by a brown bear while walking her puppies late one Sunday afternoon, had a single thought before surgery: Please call my principal and tell him to get a substitute teacher for the next day, she told a hospital nurse.

Colleen Sinnott, a special education teacher at Tustumena Elementary School in Kasilof, was walking with her husband along a rural trail when the bear charged and slammed Sinnott to the ground. She suffered a deep gash along her head and shoulder injuries.

The fact that she was thinking of her students, and not herself, on her way into the operating room didn't surprise her school's principal, John Halverson. "She's very professional and responsible," Halverson told the *Anchorage Daily News*. "She hasn't missed five days of work in the five years I've been here."



Global Takes

Universal Trends

Developing countries are increasing the number of college graduates they produce and rapidly closing the lead that "advanced countries" have long established in elementary school enrollment rates, literacy rates, and other education benchmarks, according to an analysis by The Conference Board.

Primary school enrollment rates for low-income countries, which include places like Haiti, Samoa, and Senegal, have risen from about 65 percent in 1970 to about 94 percent in 2001. But less than half of the students in those countries go on to get a high school education, and less than 22 percent get a college degree.

Still, if these trends persist, the Conference Board predicts that the emerging world may have almost 100 percent literacy by 2035.

Turkish Union Can Stay

A Turkish court announced late last year that the teachers' union Egitim Sen could stay operational, after it removed from its statutes an article that advocated teaching children in their own language—even if it's Kurdish, not Turkish. The union had been found guilty in May of constitutional violations and was subsequently supported in its battle by Education International, of which NEA is a member.

Got a good story?

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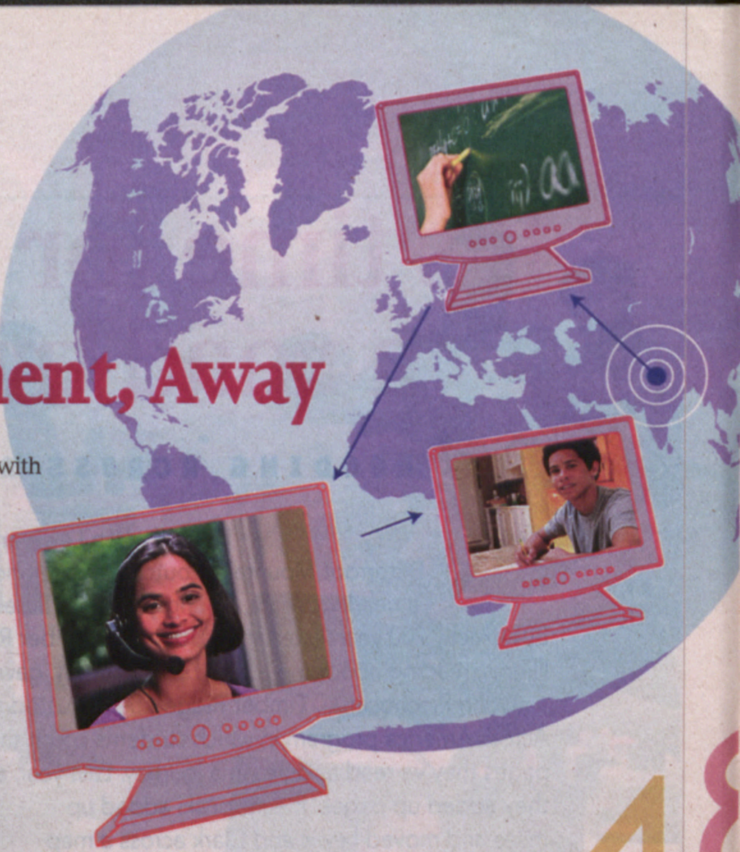


Online Tutors: A Click, and a Continent, Away

HOURS BEFORE DAWN, in New Delhi, India, a call center is abuzz with computer operators assisting American customers, an ocean away. But they're not the tech geeks or customer service reps you might expect, dealing with frozen computer screens or questions about credit card bills—instead, they're helping school kids with homework.

In the latest twist on outsourcing, a growing number of Indian companies are providing educational services, such as online tutoring, to American students, and at a fraction of the cost. While some domestic companies, like Sylvan or Tutor.com, charge from $40 an hour, the Indian companies—leveraging a huge population of highly educated, tech-savvy, and often low-wage workers—charge between $10 and $25 an hour for the same services.

Students connect with their tutors using technology such as VOIP (Voice Over Internet Protocol) so they can actually speak to each other, and electronic whiteboards so students can draw diagrams, work out problems, and erase mistakes, just as they would on notebook paper. Typed questions and answers between student and tutor can be seen instantly on both computer screens. For more information, visit www.growingstars.com or www.edumatics.com.

TRADE SECRETS

The skills you use on the job can help another member with a dilemma on the home front.

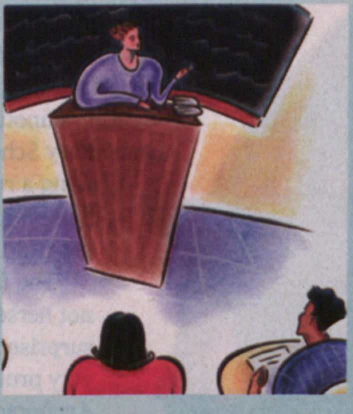
THIS MONTH: David Montera, a speech and debate teacher at Pueblo Centennial High School in Colorado, presents his best advice for speaking in public.

No Sweat!

If you feel nervous about speaking in front of people, remember: The message is always more important than the messenger. By concentrating on the points you want to make rather than focusing on yourself, your confidence will naturally increase.

MEAN WHAT YOU SAY. As Lyndon B. Johnson said, "What convinces is conviction." If you don't believe in your own message or possess passion for it, don't deliver it.

DRIVE YOUR POINT HOME. There is nothing wrong with repeating the same idea two or three times with different words, in different ways, to make sure it is understood and remembered. For example, you could say that "schools are underfunded," that "dollars are needed for supplies," and that "the debate team is forced to fund-raise to meet expenses," all in the same speech to hammer the message home.



GOT A TIP TO SHARE?

We're looking for members to advise their colleagues on how to **provide care for an aging parent.** If you'd like to be considered, e-mail **clong@nea.org** with your name and local, a brief description of what you do, and your top three tips.

TOP ILLUSTRATION: DON BISHOP, PHOTOS (CLOCKWISE): TR IMAGE, NOEL HENDRICKSON, STEVE SMITH; ILLUSTRATION BOTTOM: GETTY IMAGES

GIRL BULLYING

TELL US MORE

Sugar and spice and everything nice? Ha! Social aggression among school-age girls is on the rise—and can be vicious. Have you witnessed girls torment peers through name-calling, spreading rumors, revealing confidences, or cyber-bullying? Have you seen their victims withdraw, miss school, and suffer academically? Tell us your story and how you helped address the problem. Please reply to neatoday-reply@list.nea.org.

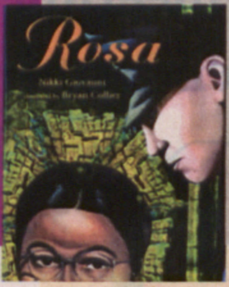
8

[STATISTIC]

The percentage of **WAL-MART** employees with **HEALTH INSURANCE.**

SOURCE: INTERNAL WAL-MART MEMO, REPORTED BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BOOK FOCUS



Remembering Rosa

IN THIS BEAUTIFULLY illustrated children's book, simply entitled *Rosa*, author activist Nikki Giovanni writes, "She sighed as she realized she was tired. Not tired from work, but tired of putting white people first. Tired of stepping off sidewalks to let white people pass, tired of eating at separate lunch counters and learning at separate schools....She had not sought this moment, but she was ready for it." You need not ask, "Rosa who?" Civil rights legend Rosa Parks, who died last October 24, sat down on a Birmingham bus one Thursday afternoon in December 1955 and then refused to give up her seat, as the law once required, to a white man. In choosing to stay seated, she stood up for civil rights and changed the world. Giovanni's book, published by Henry Holt and appropriate for all ages, is a glorious tribute.

An A-Plus for Student Leaders!

Who will take home this year's Student Program Annual Awards?

FIRST 5 YEARS

LAST YEAR, University of Evansville (UE) education student Hannah Sitzman dazzled her professors—"an outstanding student whose commitment to her profession is exemplary," one said—with her academic and leadership skills. As president of the Indiana Student Education Association and its UE chapter, she was recommended "warmly, highly, and enthusiastically" for the NEA Student Program Annual Awards.

But who will this year's Hannah Sitzman be? Which emerging leader will take home the Outstanding Local Student Leader Award this year? Surely you know another student equally as talented, motivating and motivated, and deserving of NEA's highest honors?

Now is the time to answer those questions—as well as consider which student programs and newsletters deserve recognition. For information about the application and award requirements, check out www.nea.org/student-program.

The NEA Student Program Annual Awards honor an outstanding local advisor, state organizer, local student leader, and state student leader, as well as an outstanding class project. Awards also are given to excellent local and state programs, local and state newsletters, and a local Web site. In addition, recognition is given to new local chapters. This year, the awards will be announced at the annual meeting in June in Orlando.

PHOTO BOTTOM: CHRISTIAN LOPEZ

University of San Diego

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Teacher Power

Jonathan Kozol wants to team up with NEA in a new movement to banish 'apartheid schooling.'

Author and teacher Jonathan Kozol has gotten to know a lot of America's teachers, and basically, he loves them.

Over four decades and 11 books, much of his powerful writing has been devoted to describing the "treasured places" that fabulous teachers can create for children.

But those treasured places are like the Florida Everglades—slowly disappearing. Increasingly, it's up to NEA and other advocates for the teaching profession, like Kozol, to defend the conditions and job security that make it possible for good teachers to work their magic, and also stave off an onslaught of misguided federal dictates. Dictates like the high-stakes testing craze, which Kozol believes is "not to benefit children but to humiliate the public enterprise in order to set the stage for the voucher program."

Reg Weaver and **Jonathan Kozol** confer on the high-stakes testing and the continued inequity in American schools.

"[The bureaucrats] are so accustomed to making decisions for us, about us, without us, in spite of us, and think that we should follow those dictates and mandates without having anything to say," NEA President Reg Weaver said to Kozol during a recent meeting in Washington, D.C.

> **"I'M GOING TO** encourage teachers...to speak out politically, to rise up and protest, not only against this testing madness...but also about the perpetual separation of our children so they don't know each other any longer in America." —JONATHAN KOZOL

"They don't give us credit for having the professionalism, the knowledge, the care we must have in our classrooms today for kids."

"What a way to welcome a teacher to a school system!" said Kozol. "'Oh, we're so happy to have you in our school. Here's a teacher-proof lesson which is so perfect that even you can't do it wrong.'"

In his new book, *The Shame of the Nation: The Restoration of Apartheid Schooling in America*, Kozol reserves some of his most passionate denunciations for what he sees as the assault on professionalism by advocates of scripted literacy programs—which, he notes, are used almost exclusively in low-income, minority communities. White, middle-class parents, he says, would never stand for these programs' rote learning strategies.

In *The Shame of the Nation*, Kozol, who got his start teaching fourth grade in a segregated Boston classroom in 1964, casts his searchlight on the comeback of racial segregation today. He calls it "the restoration of apartheid schooling."

Almost all of the education debate these days, Kozol says, is about how to make segregated schools better—how to "polish the apple of apartheid" is the way he puts it—rather than how to abolish segregation and finally let America's races go to school together.

Kozol hopes working with Weaver and the NEA will help mobilize teachers to take action politically and launch a new movement for racial integration.

He said to Weaver, "I'm going to encourage teachers, who are the best witnesses because they're in the classroom, to speak out politically, to rise up and protest, not only against this testing madness—which is sociopathic in its consequences—but also about the perpetual separation of our children so they don't know each other any longer in America, and to protest the bitter unfairness of investing twice as much money in a White suburban child as we do in a low-income inner-city child in America. These things have to change."

"The 2.7 million members of the National Education Association are with you, Jonathan," said Weaver. "We are on the front lines, working to make sure that every child, not just some but every child, has access to a quality public education. You want what the NEA wants."

—ALAIN JEHLEN

TO WATCH video of Kozol and Weaver's discussion, read excerpts from Kozol's new book, and talk with your colleagues online about it, see www.nea.org/neatodayextra/kozol.html.

PHOTO: CHESTER SIMPSON

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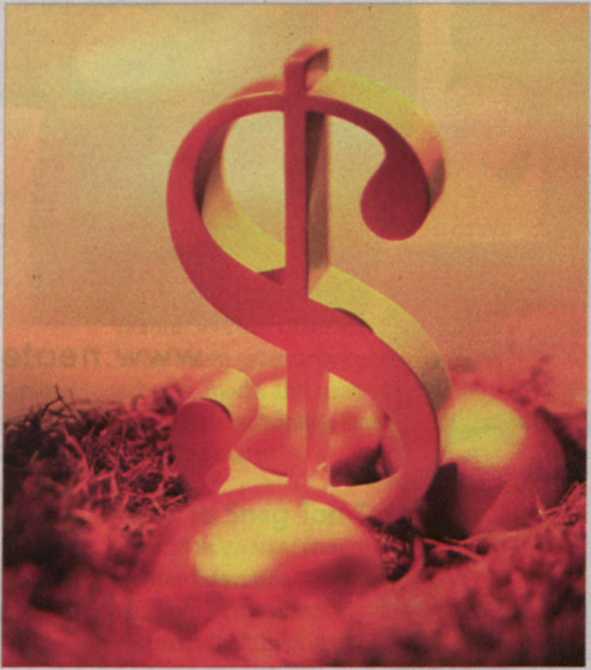
Pension Perils

Two states approach retirement security from opposite directions.

Talk about a Continental Divide. As a result of freshly signed legislation, new West Virginia educators hired as of July 1 last year were channeled into a defined-benefit retirement plan; yet on July 1, 2006, Alaska newbies are to be pushed into a defined-contribution plan.

The difference? With defined-benefit plans, you know exactly how much of a monthly benefit you'll receive after you retire, and that amount (determined by a formula that factors in your years of service and final average salary) is guaranteed. With defined-contribution plans, the amount you receive is not predictable and there are no guarantees: You and your employer contribute money to an investment account, and it's up to you to decide how the money is invested (plans typically offer a mix of stock/bond mutual funds and other investment options). When you retire, the amount left in the account represents your retirement income.



Is your retirement nest egg in peril? Newly hired teachers in Alaska will be forced into a defined-contribution plan starting in July, while newbies in West Virginia have the security of a defined-benefit pension plan.

ONE STEP BACK

In fierce lobbying, NEA-Alaska (NEA-AK) stressed that the state's new defined-contribution scheme would impoverish teachers and support professionals, force a "brain drain" from Alaska, and remove the "safety net" of the state's teachers, who do not receive Social Security. But this state affiliate stalemated with lawmakers determined to shirk the state's 50-year commitment to pay a third of local government retirement costs.

At press time, NEA-AK had a proposal before the Legislature to delay implementation of the plan until July 1, 2008; a vote is expected in the current session. Meanwhile, the state affiliate has joined a coalition of other labor organizations that hired an actuary group to determine the impact of funneling employees into the proposed defined-contribution plan. "We believe that doing this will add to, not reduce, the state's liability, since a smaller pool of employees will be contributing to the remaining defined-benefit plan," says Bill Bjork, president of NEA-AK.

The coalition is also interested in having the actuary determine the viability of developing an alternate, hybrid plan that would combine a defined-benefit plan with post-retirement health insurance.

ONE STEP FORWARD

In contrast, the West Virginia Education Association (WVEA) had the lessons of history on its side. In 1991, the Mountain State made the same blunder as Alaska, herding all newly hired educators into a Teachers Defined Contribution (TDC) retirement plan and closing the older, defined-benefit Teachers Retirement System (TRS) to new participants.

Big mistake. TDC participants were offered no education or training in how to invest their money; investment options were few, limiting participants' ability to diversify; and the plan's administrator failed to issue accurate, timely statements. WVEA "tracked the defined-contribution plan's terrible job," reports WVEA Executive Director David Haney, "and we lobbied for several years to provide safeguards for TDC plan members and to change the law."

Their hard work paid off. Last year, WVEA won legislation that places all new hires in the traditional TRS system, closing the defined-contribution plan to new members. In early March 2006, existing TDC members will vote, by a simple majority, whether to stay in the defined-contribution plan or join TRS. WVEA insisted, however, that before a vote is taken, the public retirement board must deliver a comprehensive education program to voting members that includes individualized statements, showing what their benefit would be under TRS and TDC.

The members, of course, will decide, but two facts are undeniable: The entry of new hires has pumped new funding into the defined-benefit plan, and actuaries have predicted that a merger between the retirement plans could save the state some $1.4 billion over 30 years. How is that possible? The state's cost of maintaining the defined-benefit plan is only 4.3 percent of payroll, compared to 7.5 percent under TDC. This would give members a stable retirement system "that is not contingent on the stock market," says Haney. WVEA's goal, he concludes, is to "obtain a safe, secure, and predictable pension plan for all school employees."

—DAVE WINANS

FOR MORE ON HOW to protect your retirement benefits, go to www.nea.org/retired/tools/publications.html#toolkit.

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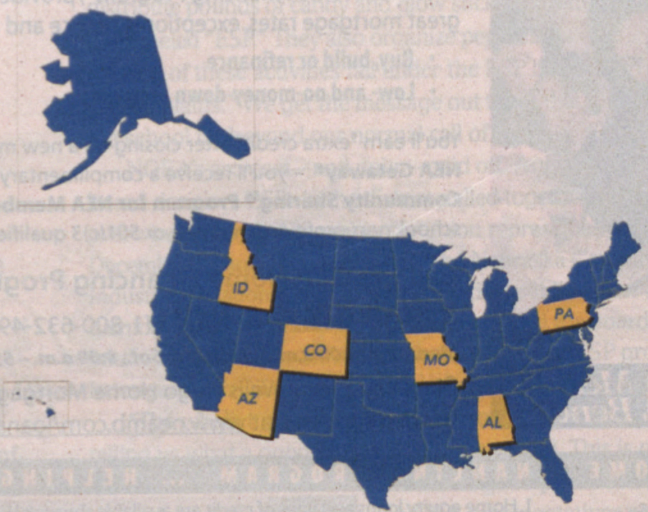

100 Percent Deception

MISSOURI Gov. Matt Blunt is pushing for legislation that will limit the way school districts can spend money. Dubbed the "65 Percent Solution," it would require districts to spend at least 65 percent of their budget on items related to student instruction such as teacher salaries, textbooks, computers, and sports—regardless of district needs. That would leave only 35 percent for all other costs, including libraries, building maintenance, transportation, administration, and psychological and health services. Blunt wants legislators to put a referendum before voters in November 2006. "It offers no solution at all," says Greg Jung, president of the **Missouri National Education Association (MNEA).** According to 2002–03 figures of five sample school districts, only one adhered to the 65 percent goal. Similar legislation has been proposed in at least 15 other states.

By the Book Campaign

ALABAMA After seeing how a living wage campaign increased salaries and boosted membership in Birmingham City, members of the **Jasper City Education Support Professional Association (JCESPA)** organized their own campaign in October 2004. A year later, membership increased by 10 percent to 119, and wages went up 1.5 percent above the state increase of 6 percent. That 1.5 figure updated a local salary schedule that had been in place since 1980. Their success tactics included community coalition building and use of comparable ESP wage figures with 10 school systems from the region with similar economic characteristics. "We compared apples with apples, not oranges," says UniServ Director and campaign manager Natasha Jackson.

TABOR is Toast

COLORADO In 1992, Coloradans amended their constitution by installing a Taxpayer Bill of Rights (TABOR). The plan's rigid ceiling on state spending made drastic budget cuts inevitable. The cutbacks caused Colorado to drop from 35th to 49th in the nation in K–12 spending as a percentage of personal income. Also, in-state college tuition increased 21 percent over the last four years. Last November, voters passed a referendum that suspended TABOR for five years. "This does not solve Colorado's K–12 funding problem," says Deborah Fallin, spokesperson for the **Colorado Education Association (CEA).** "It only keeps it from getting worse." Colorado's failed budget experiment arbitrarily cut funding on schools, roads, and health care. Other states are confronting similar reduced spending plans.

How To Snag Top Teachers

PENNSYLVANIA Though the **Homer-Center Education Association (HCEA)** has only 71 members in a 1,000-student district, all of them are "good leaders and good people," says **Pennsylvania State Education Association (PSEA)** UniServ Director Bob Paskowski. Together, they gained a starting teacher's salary of $42,566 this school year, escalating to a possible $52,012 in 2009–10. Also part of the deal: higher raises via an 11-step salary schedule. Little wonder that this district—despite its rural location—is now a top-tier destination for teachers.

State Legislators Need Initiative

IDAHO At the start of the school year, almost half of Idaho's teachers were working without a contract. **Idaho Education Association (IEA)** bargaining teams in 29 locals were trying to secure new contracts for 7,276 of Idaho's more than 15,800 teachers. In most cases, the barrier was insufficient public funds. Yet, by the end of November, IEA negotiators were able to win contracts for members in 22 of those locals. "It's been four years since legislators have put any new money into education," says IEA President Sherri Wood. "Educators are fed up with watching pay decrease as insurance, gasoline, and electricity costs rise." Teachers and ESPs don't blame district officials. "It's not the districts' fault. It's the Legislature," added Wood. IEA is leading the way for a November ballot initiative aimed at increasing education funding.

Securing Funds for the Future

ARIZONA K–12 public education is allotted millions of dollars a year from revenue generated by the leasing and sale of more than 9 million acres of state trust lands. Currently, the land is managed by a commissioner appointed by the governor. The **Arizona Education Association (AEA)** wants to change this in an effort to protect those funds and the environment. Together with conservation groups, AEA is spearheading a signature campaign for a November ballot initiative. Titled Conserving Arizona's Future (CAF), the initiative aims to conserve natural lands, create a board of trustees (to include educators), and force developers to build quality projects. The initiative will provide a secure funding source for public education for generations to come, says John Wright, AEA president and CAF treasurer.

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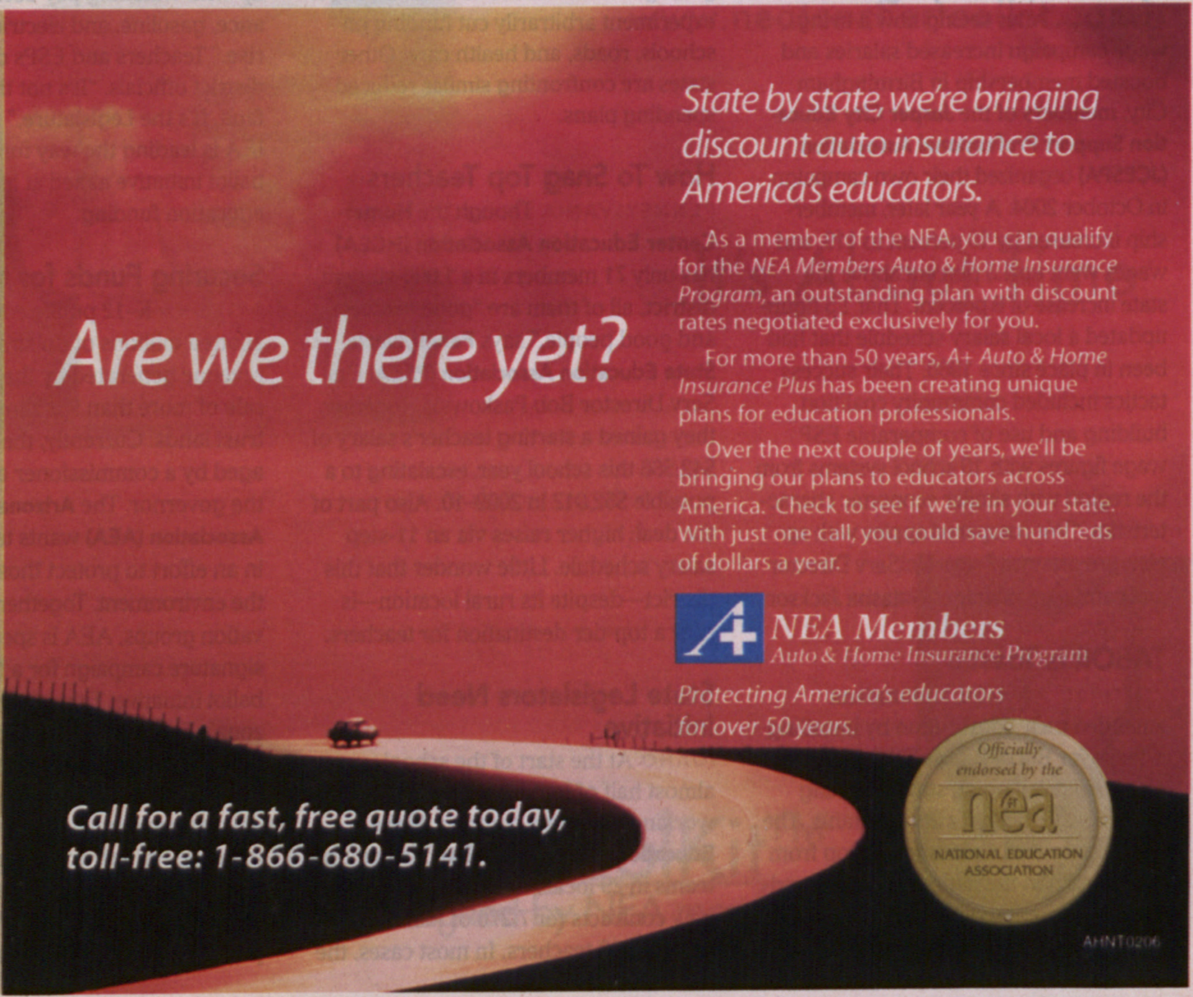

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Making a Good Impression

Positive public relations can help face-lift the sagging image of an ESP local.

The headline in Nebraska's *Neligh News* last May 11 read: "ESPs Denied as Bargaining Agents." The front page story outlined the blistering defeat suffered by education support professionals (ESPs) at the previous night's board meeting.

The 15 ESPs who belong to the Neligh-Oakdale Education Association (NOEA) were distraught over their rejected proposal to secure bargaining rights for three groups—paraeducators and clerical and food service employees. (While teachers and ESPs both belong to NOEA, only teachers have contracts. ESPs work "at will.") The bruising headline only added salt to the wound.

"Our members felt bad about that headline," says Linda Welch, NOEA vice president and a secretary at Neligh-Oakdale Elementary School. Still, she knew the fight to win bargaining rights wasn't over. The silver lining in this episode, she explained to members, was that the folks at the newspaper didn't have to spell out E-S-P. "They knew that everyone in town knows what E-S-P means," she says. "It's a reflection of our good public relations."

Nebraska secretary **Linda Welch** helps "get the word out" about how ESPs benefit schools.

For years, NOEA ESPs had engaged in a public relations campaign to convince the school board, administrators, and community that they contribute more than their share to school activities and deserve bargaining rights. ESP volunteers are known to decorate athletes' lockers before games, sponsor student scholarships, and distribute pounds of candy and glow sticks at events from a tote bag labeled "ESP." They also organize pep rallies.

"All of these activities fall under the ESP banner," Welch later explains. "We get the message out there that we benefit the school far beyond our normal call of duty."

NOEA's activism—and unity—paid off. After the school board decision, ESPs in the district pulled together and voted overwhelmingly in November for union representation. On December 3 came the good news: The Nebraska Commission of Industrial Relations (NCIR), which handles public sector bargaining issues for public employees, overruled the board and notified NOEA and school officials that the three ESP groups belonging to NOEA were to be recognized as a bargaining unit.

"The whole town was behind us," said Welch. "People were telling us what a good job we do for the school. This is one result of good public relations." NOEA representatives plan to meet with the school board in spring to begin negotiating the 2006–07 contract.

TRAINING CAN HELP

Across the country, ESPs struggle to define themselves as dedicated, skilled support staff crucial to a school's smooth operation. Too often, they are mistakenly perceived as dispensable.

"Negative perceptions about ESPs can become barriers to communicating effectively at school and in the community," says Roger Gray, a PR specialist who has worked on dozens of NEA grassroots campaigns. "The response to this by some ESP locals has been to take control of their image through public relations; otherwise they are stuck with either being misunderstood or going unnoticed." Gray adds that as more ESPs receive training in message development, media relations, and leadership, they will experience greater success negotiating contracts.

This is one reason that the Nebraska State Education Association (NSEA) started a program called Encouraging and Strengthening Potential Leaders. The program trains ESPs who may be called on to bargain contracts, build coalitions, and pitch story ideas to reporters.

Linda Welch, who finished the program in 2003, says the training gave her the confidence and knowledge she needed to promote ESPs in her community. "Getting our image out there is important in a practical sense," she says. "So when we go to the bargaining table, board members will know we're worth listening to."

—JOHN ROSALES

7 Steps to a Better Image

Roger Gray, president of Portland-based Gray Strategies, offers this media plan:

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE How do you want them to perceive you?

STAY ON MESSAGE List three things you want your audience to understand about ESPs.

IDENTIFY RESOURCES How much money and how many volunteers are available?

DISTRIBUTE YOUR MESSAGE Consider paid and unpaid media.

IDENTIFY COLLABORATORS There is strength in numbers.

WRITE A GAME PLAN Include a timeline so that priorities are met.

MEASURE RESULTS Higher salaries and increased membership are two signs of success.

More ESP stories in this issue:

- A head custodian promotes reading in schools – *Page 13*
- A well-run campaign wins gains for Alabama ESPs – *Page 21*

PHOTO: JOAN WRIGHT

IS SMALLER BETTER?

Many teachers in the 'small high schools' movement shout 'Yes!'—but others are less convinced. Here's what you need to know about this latest wave of reform.

BY ALAIN JEHLEN AND CYNTHIA KOPKOWSKI

It started as an experiment led by a group of dedicated innovators. Their early successes grew into a reform movement. Now, the effort to transform large urban high schools into small schools has turned into a virtual stampede, driven by a giant carrot (Bill Gates' money) and an even bigger stick (No Child Left Behind).

Thousands of new schools, generally with 400 or fewer students, have been launched in the last few years. Many are stand-alone schools created from scratch. Others were formed by dividing big schools into several "small learning communities," or "academies," which still share the old building. Most keep teachers and students together for several years to strengthen their relationships.

Many educators love their little academies, where everyone knows everyone else and discipline problems no longer dominate the classroom. "I'm getting to do what I really want to do, and that's teach," says Patty Kamper, an art teacher in Kansas City, Kansas. "The teaching becomes so much easier because you know how they learn."

The benefits for students are clear. "In a large high school, students can become invisible and slip through the cracks," says Marsha Smith, a middle school physical education teacher in Rockville, Maryland, who serves on the NEA Executive Committee. "In a small school, you personalize attention to the student." Downsized schools, she adds, "give students and parents a sense of community."

But like most good education reforms, this one can be done well or badly. "Small schools can be great, but they do take more resources," says Oakland, California, math teacher Jack Gerson. His big high school was chopped into three small ones. "Now we have three principals, three attendance clerks, three offices," says Gerson, and yet Oakland is slashing its school budget.

Many cities are imposing small schools from the top down, but success depends on giving teachers a leading role, says journalism teacher Stan Karp, who led a small school in Patterson, New Jersey, and now works on a state taskforce writing guidelines for small, urban high schools. "Where the rubber meets the road is in the teacher teams. They're on the front lines," he says. "They need support and autonomy."

That's why it's important for Association members to be proactive when a small school conversion is in the works, says Smith. "The union needs to call people together and move out

PHOTO: REED HOFFMANN

front. Have a discussion with members and talk about the pros and the potential challenges. This needs to be done with us, not to us."

The huge high schools now being carved up are the product of an earlier reform wave intended to offer a variety of courses to suit the needs of every student. In affluent communities where most students come to school ready to learn, big schools tend to do well and there's little appetite for breaking them up. But in low-income areas, big schools can breed paralyzing discipline problems.

One of the movement's leading pioneers was Deborah Meier, who founded Central Park East High School in East Harlem in 1985. (See interview on page 30.) Her success led to other experiments, and in 2000, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation awarded its first grant for a small high school in San Diego. Gates has since poured $1 billion into creating about 850 small new schools and breaking up 700 big old schools.

Meanwhile, the so-called No Child Left Behind law, with its escalating punishments for schools with low test scores, is putting mounting pressure on schools in low-income areas, where scores are much lower than in wealthy areas. Something has to be done, and starting small schools definitely qualifies as something.

But recently, Gates Foundation leaders have sounded less enthusiastic about the virtues of smallness. A Gates-commissioned study revealed that test scores in a sample of Gates-funded schools were slightly lower than for comparable students in regular public schools. Small school teachers told the researchers they were struggling with heavy workloads. "Unwieldy workloads may be endemic to…many small high schools," the report warned.

"We still believe in small schools," says James Shelton, the foundation's education program director, but adds that they now put more emphasis on improving the quality of instruction because downsizing is not enough.

Likewise, many educators say the move to small schools can be a giant step forward—if done right. *NEA Today* recently visited schools in two cities to hear from frontline educators about the virtues and problems of the "small-is-beautiful" movement.

Kansas City, Kansas

SAVING A TROUBLED SCHOOL

The teachers at Wyandotte High School in Kansas City shifted in their seats and set their jaws. It was 1997, and yet another administrator was detailing yet another education reform they would have to implement. This time it was called "First Things First," and it required breaking their

Having come from a large school, Kansas math teacher Lesley Hornberger relishes the one-on-one relationships a small environment affords.

1,200-student high school into several self-contained units, called learning communities.

"We about chewed him up and spit him out," says visual arts teacher Patty Kamper, recalling that uncomfortable introduction to the small schools movement. "Here was another program coming at us and it's top down."

Then the teachers began considering their troubled school, where academic disinterest and discipline problems made teaching a Herculean task. Truancy and tardiness were rampant. Students set locker fires, urinated in classrooms, and intimidated teachers. "You'd get to the point where you would walk out at the end of the day and not want to ever walk back in," says Dave Toepfer, an applied skills teacher.

Veteran teacher **Patty Kamper**—there for Wyandotte High's at-times rocky small-school conversion—is an ardent fan of the change.

Wyandotte High's staff made a group decision to take back their halls by embracing the small schools idea—but they did it with the understanding that they would have complete autonomy. A new principal and superintendent, who agreed that decisions about educating students were best left to the people actually doing the educating, made that possible. And that goes a long way toward explaining why Kansas City today has a national reputation for successfully implementing the change to small high schools.

"Administrators have to give teachers free reign to make this thing work," says Toepfer. "Otherwise, it won't."

Within the first year, the school's dropout rate decreased and its graduation rate increased. A new zero-tolerance policy cut tardies from 2,000 the previous year to only 24. While test scores still fall below the state average, those scores are improvements over the early years of the small school system. In 2003, 4 percent of 10th-graders scored proficiently or better on the Kansas State Assessment test, up from 1 percent in 2000. Reading scores jumped 15 percent during that time.

The reason for the success: "Teachers were no longer at the bottom of the barrel on decision-making," says history teacher Romona Robson.

Instead, they were meeting in committees and voting, almost weekly, on the mechanics of the eight small schools. Decisions about each school's theme—such as business, health, global communications, and performing arts—disciplinary measures, block scheduling, and space allocation within the imposing, castle-like 1930s building came from faculty votes.

That independence remains in place today. If a school's teachers think a student should be suspended, he is. When the typing teacher in the business school realized the 90 minutes in a

PHOTOS: REED HOFFMANN

block schedule period were too much for her students (their fingers cramped), the faculty tweaked the schedule to accommodate shorter elective periods.

Ask any teacher at Wyandotte about the biggest boon from the small school conversion and they will invariably reply that it is the relationships, with and among the students and with each other. Each day a team of about 10 teachers instructs the same 160 to 200 students within their learning community. (Teachers begin with a group of students in freshman year and stay with them through graduation.) The educators meet twice weekly, discussing administrative tasks and curriculum. They even eat lunch together—not just to chat about the previous night's *West Wing*, but to find out how their students are faring that day.

"We know by lunchtime which students are having a bad day," says math teacher Lesley Hornberger.

And the teachers know when they need to go the extra mile, literally, for their students. Some nights, instead of heading home to dinner, Kamper drives several miles out of her way to take a senior student home. The boy would have had to leave Wyandotte High because his parents moved to find work. Kamper knew he deserved a senior year in the environment that had cultivated his artistic talents. She knew that because she had been one of the teachers nurturing him for the past three years.

"He worked so hard, and to have to leave now?" she says. "How could I let that happen?"

LINCOLN ELECTRIC

Drawbacks of small schools, such as administrative burdens falling on staff, are outweighed by the pluses, says teacher **Dave Toepfer**.

SOME HEADACHES REMAIN

With eight years of experience comes Wyandotte's teachers' willingness to speak candidly about the pitfalls of small schools. For starters, the same administrative autonomy that teachers demanded also brought extra work, especially for those serving as coordinators—and de facto principals—of their learning communities. Among their duties is designing schedules for as many as 200 students each semester.

"Scheduling is a pain," Toepfer says. "Essentially, everyone is on an [individualized education program]."

Because each learning community adheres to a theme, students can find course offerings limited. Students may take a specialty class in another learning community, called "cross pollinating," but teachers try to limit student movement within the building. Until recently, faculty from a local college came and taught college-level courses, but budget cuts ended that. Now teachers are trying to figure out how to offer Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate courses.

Assigning teachers to subject areas proved difficult as well. During the initial planning, instructors completed a survey on their expertise and interests. But when the dust settled, some weren't in the area they preferred and left Wyandotte High.

Such drawbacks are a small price to pay for the overwhelming success, Wyandotte's educators say. They encourage teachers whose schools are converting to small schools to aggressively seek a voice in the process and then to be flexible and patient as the change unfolds.

"Keep an open mind and communicate," Kamper says. "You will see results."

Oakland, California

HELP WANTED!

Walk into the teachers' room at Life Academy in Oakland, California, and right away you're struck by how young the faculty is. "Luckily, we don't have kids, because if we start having our own families, there's no way we can sustain this," explains math teacher Candace Hamilton.

Life Academy is a tiny, 260-student school with a biotech theme, located a mile and a half from the large high school it budded off from five years ago—a move that was led by the Academy's teachers. Students get two years' credit toward a California biotech lab certificate when they graduate, and with another year at a nearby community college, they'll be eligible for jobs in the mushrooming biotech industry.

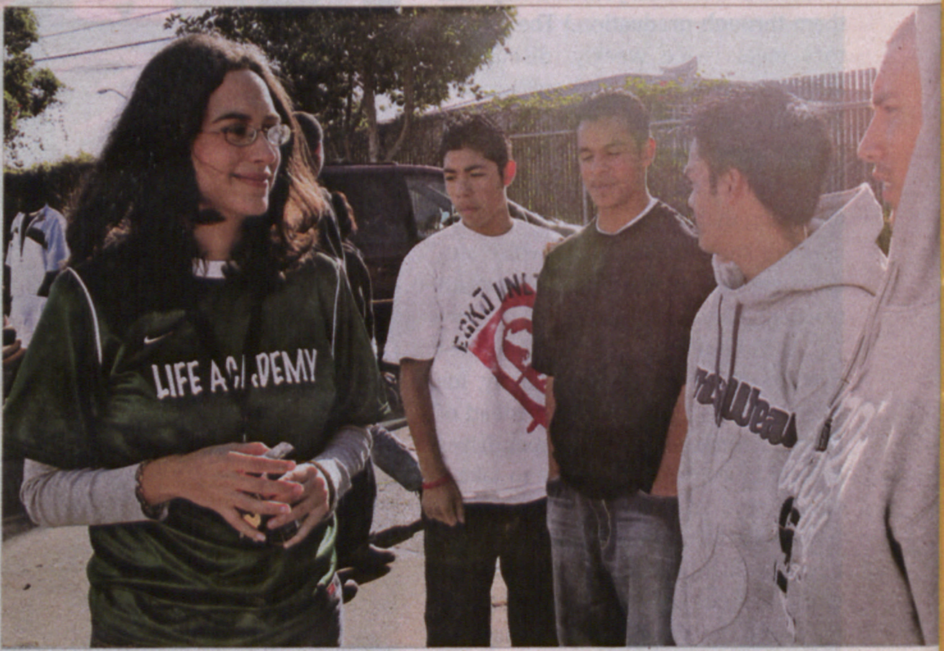
Like other Oakland schools, however, it has been hit by brutal budget cuts, which means, among other things, that there aren't enough teachers. Oakland is a prime example of what happens when a district decides to go small and cheap at the same time.

"The first two years, I had five preps," says math teacher Richard Boettner, who helped found Life Academy five years ago. "This is the first year I have just three." (The contract allows teachers to refuse more than two.) "There are more demands on your time in a small school," he adds. "Each teacher is a big piece of the pie—you can't hide here."

Unlike most of the staff, Boettner does have a child—a two-year-old daughter. On top of that, he lives in Davis, an hour and a half north on the freeway. He could get a job closer to home, but "the people here are phenomenal," he says. "One teacher gets here at 7:15 to teach journalism before school because her course didn't fit into the schedule. You don't get that kind of dedication unless the staff is all on the game plan."

Now that he's a dad, Boettner leaves right after school. "My wife would kill me if I stayed until six like I used to," he says. But he makes up for it by resuming work after his daughter and wife go to sleep, and by getting in first in the morning, turning off the alarm, and opening the doors at 7 a.m. His colleague Carmelita Reyes arrives a few minutes later to teach her journalism course.

"At my previous school, you were just responsible for teaching," she says. "Here, I'm also the librarian and I'm in charge of writing grants, keeping the computer lab running, and 'Are we



Besides teaching, **Carmelita Reyes** keeps the computers running and writes grants.

SIZE 'EM UP

THE SMALL HIGH SCHOOL MOVEMENT EVOKES STRONG FEELINGS FOR AND AGAINST—OFTEN IN THE SAME PERSON. HERE'S WHAT TEACHERS SAY ABOUT WORKING IN SMALL SCHOOLS:

UPSIDE

CLOSER RELATIONSHIPS with students motivate students to learn and improve teaching because teachers understand what makes each student tick.

BETTER DISCIPLINE and less frequent classroom disruptions. Tardiness and cutting class can be significantly reduced. Strong teacher teams are better able to monitor students' performance and behavior.

INNOVATION and interdisciplinary teaching are easier.

GREATER OPPORTUNITY to connect with parents, who may push kids to work harder.

STUDENTS FORM CLOSER relationships with each other, giving them a stronger peer network.

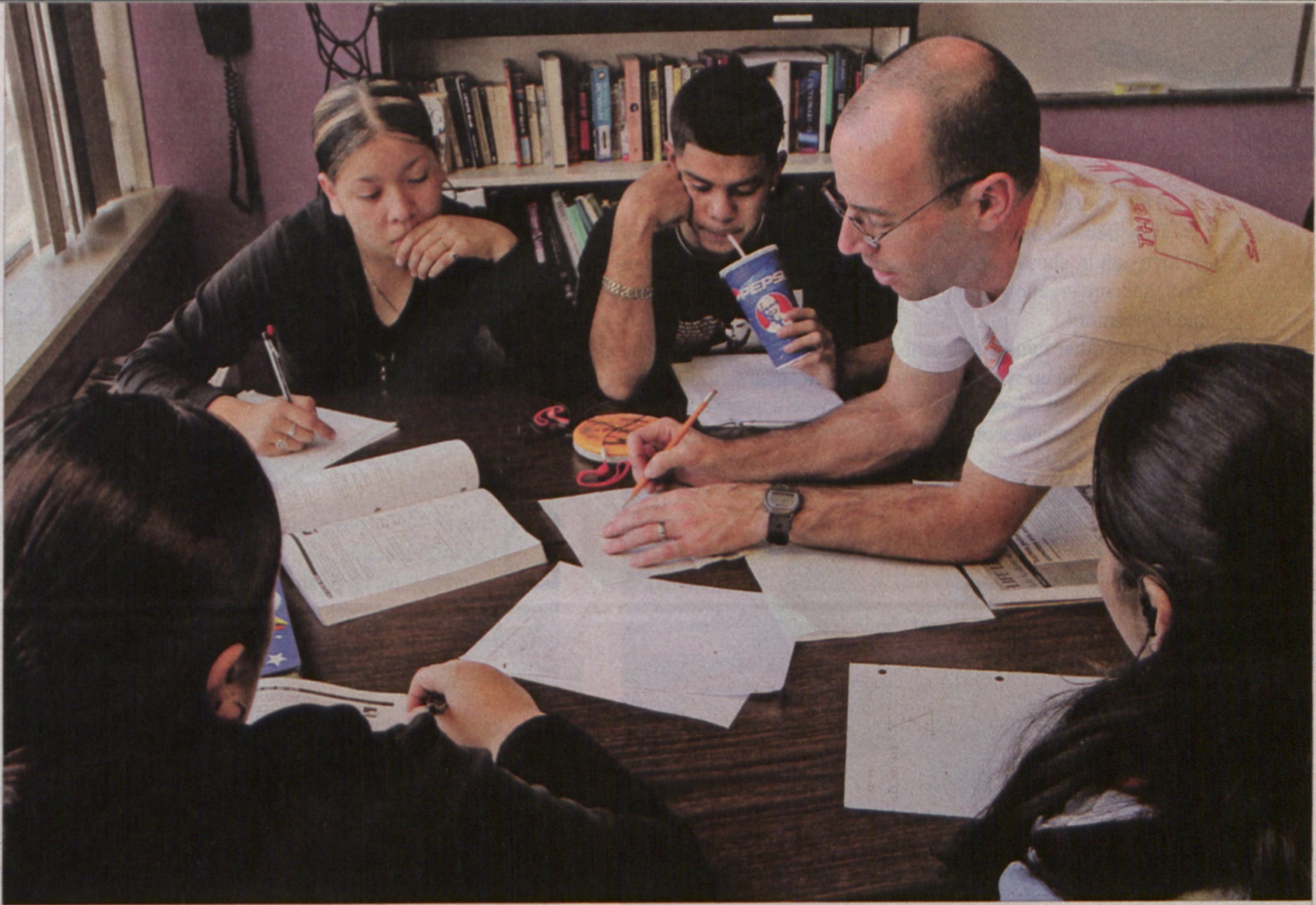
DOWNSIDE

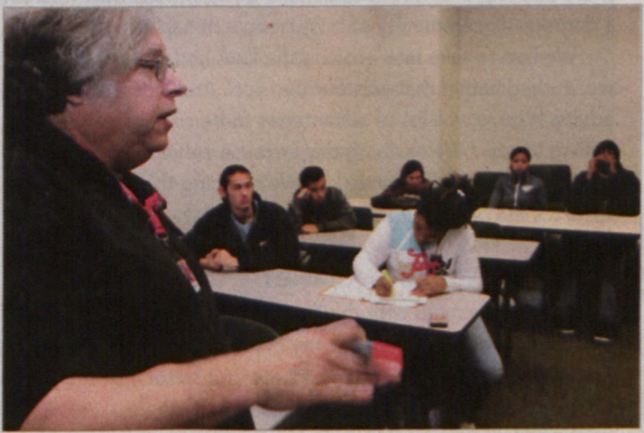
TEACHERS WEAR many hats, carrying out functions beyond teaching. Many feel overloaded.

LESS VARIETY OF COURSES. Advanced Placement classes, electives, and extras such as sports teams may fall by the wayside.

SELF-SEGREGATION. When students choose their small schools, they may sort themselves out by ethnic group, social class, motivation, and academic ability.

HIGHER COST. Economies of scale of big schools are lost.





Richard Boettner (top) drives three hours each day to teach math and work with a "phenomenal" staff. **Jack Gerson** (left) loves the closer ties with students, but says small schools cost more to run.

going to have uniforms next year?'"

Even with teachers playing many roles, Life Academy can't offer a wide range of extracurricular activities or courses.

"Every small school has to decide what it will do well and abandon other programs," says Reyes. "Some students come here and are bummed out that they can't take art because we decided we're science."

SAFETY IN (SMALL) NUMBERS

The narrow range of courses is the main complaint that comes up when English teacher Vicki Stoneham's students discuss small schools at Oakland's Leadership Preparatory High School, one of three new schools carved out of 1,500-student Castlemont High two years ago.

But for most of these students—seniors who remember the old school—the benefits outweigh the cost.

"We don't have crime and riots any more," says Sha-lin.

"I didn't use to talk to my teachers," says Sherricka, "but if you're going to have them for two years, you might as well talk to them. When teachers relate to you, you learn better."

Like Life Academy, Castlemont students are almost all low-income and minority. But unlike the teacher-led creation of Life Academy, math teacher Jack Gerson says the break-up of Castlemont was imposed over objections from many faculty members and a negative vote of the school site council, including representatives of staff, parents, and students.

Gerson was against the move, but he sees the benefits. "I thought it would be an unmitigated disaster and I was wrong," he says. "I didn't allow for the fact that you do get to know the students, and they get to know you. That's powerful. They may not act out as much in the halls, and when they're in class, there's more of a personal relationship."

A vital part of the Leadership program is the advisory group—very common in the new small high schools—in which a teacher stays with a small group of students for their entire high school career. When Gerson's group meets one period to discuss senior projects, the trust that has developed among students and teacher is prominently on display as the teens start talking about family issues with amazing openness. One girl reports that her project is on spouse abuse. "My brother is in jail because of abusing his wife," says the girl. "He broke her face."

A tall, thin boy says that sometimes men abuse their wives "kind of out of love. They're insecure. They love her so much, they're afraid of losing her."

PHOTOS: DAVID BACON

"I love you so I hit you in the face?" a girl retorts angrily.

They debate "bad genes," culture, stereotypes, the meaning of love—all in starkly personal terms—for 25 minutes. Gerson says that conversation would probably not have happened in the old Castlemont.

On the other hand, he says he was right to expect the district would not come up with the extra funding a small school needs. One example out of many: "We don't have a copier—it's in the school that's farthest from us," he says. "You have to bring your own paper and often it's locked, so most people have given up. I get up early and drive to Kinko's."

Vicki Stoneham's students say smallness helps prevent fights.

For now, educators like Gerson put in the long hours and extra effort to make their small schools work, even without the support they need. But in the long run, the fate of small high schools may depend on the willingness of school boards to give educators the funding and autonomy necessary to take advantage of the strengths and compensate for some of the weaknesses of smallness. nea

On the Web!

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READ more of Deborah Meier's interview

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A Conversation with Deborah Meier

THE SMALL SCHOOLS PIONEER TALKS ABOUT THE SCHOOL SHE STARTED AND THE CURRENT RUSH TO DOWNSIZE.

Deborah Meier has spent more than three decades working in public education as a teacher, writer, and school reformer. In 1985, she started a small school, Central Park East Secondary School in East Harlem. Its success helped launch today's small high school movement. She spoke recently with *NEA Today*'s Alain Jehlen.

Why did you start Central Park East?

MEIER: We felt high school kids needed to see strong adults who had strong feelings and would demonstrate what it's like to use their ideas in the service of actions—because that's what we're trying to teach them. You needed a community of adults with authority to make important decisions, people who shared common visions, but also had many differences that they would share publicly, and who would make decisions publicly. To create a democratic community of busy people, it had to stay small.

We had to take into account the laws and so forth, but how we worked within that was our decision. And kids like powerful adults. It gave us a lot of advantages to be seen as very rarely having to say, "We're doing this because we're told we have to." Most of the time we could say, "We're doing this because we think it's the best decision."

What was your school like?

MEIER: Kids stayed with the same teachers for several years, and each student had one faculty member responsible for them. Class sizes were small. The most powerful factor was the relationships students built with those adults.

Tell me about your graduation requirements.

MEIER: Kids had to demonstrate their competence in the major fields: math, science, history, English, community service and the arts, and they could choose others. They had to present a body of work to their graduation committee, a little like a doctoral committee, and defend one piece of work that would be their major thesis. The committee would critique it and tell them whether they had passed, and if they hadn't, in what areas they had to repeat it. It was a very powerful process because it mimicked the life of the school in which ideas were presented and defended by adults as well as young people.

How many kids didn't pass the first time?

MEIER: Maybe 15 to 20 percent needed more time. We graduated 90 percent of the kids who started with us in ninth grade, but some took five years. One kid took six.

PHOTO TOP LEFT: DAVID BACON

How long were you able to follow them?

MEIER: We tracked the kids for four years after they left. They went on and persevered in college to an amazing degree.

What about their SAT scores? I read that your kids did not do that well.

MEIER: They did not. On the whole there was nothing astounding about our SAT scores. Test scores have an extraordinarily close correlation to your grandparents' social wealth. Probably the most gifted girl in the class couldn't get into Brown because her SAT score wasn't high enough. So she ended up at Cornell and has had a wonderful legal career since. Brown lost a wonderful student.

But school experiments today are evaluated according to whether they increase test scores. Your school probably would have flunked.

MEIER: We had an experiment that, had it been evaluated today, would have a hard time proving it was effective. It's harder and harder for schools like ours to survive in a culture that only counts achievement as test scores.

Okay, let me shift gears. You must have run into some of the same problems that educators in small schools are wrestling with today. One is not being able to offer as wide a range of courses. What did you do about that?

MEIER: We had a very rich program of sending kids out to other institutions, which introduced them to a lot of things that the school curriculum couldn't. We paid a lot of attention to kids' interests. We found mentors around the city to help them. On the other hand, we couldn't offer five different languages, only Spanish. We didn't have AP courses. We opted for visual arts and dropped music altogether.

> "If you don't have in mind giving the faculty power, you are going to have a mediocre small school, and then people will start criticizing these schools…and the fad will be over."

But if there's a bunch of small schools in the same building, they can combine to offer things. The Julia Richmond Complex in New York City has a basketball team, a shared pottery studio, and a shared drama club.

There is also the problem of self-segregation. Will these small high schools wind up divided by race and class or in other ways?

MEIER: First of all, I think it's important to remember what we're comparing them to. In most high schools, even if they were integrated as a whole school, kids didn't go to integrated classes. So it may be less of a change than it appears.

But I do think the impact is worse in the small schools in some ways. That if it's clear you're going to a loser school, you're publicly acknowledging that. My granddaughter has just been applying to high school in New York City. There's a huge book full of all these names and they all have the same visions, you know, rigor, blah blah, and so what it really comes down to is, who goes to that school? You look down the data about the number of kids who graduate and their scores, and you know which are the winner schools and which are the loser schools. And guidance counselors are pretty frank, you know. They say to my son, "That's a loser school. Your daughter is good enough to get into one of the winners."

Any way around this?

MEIER: Well, we're surrounded by a larger dilemma: the growing disparities between rich and poor, and the fact that we didn't end racism. Schools, by themselves, can't solve those problems.

All in all, what do you think about the explosion of small schools in the last few years?

MEIER: The smaller units, on balance, probably will be good for most kids. But not great. Just breaking schools down is not in itself going to create a culture, especially if it's not under the control of the faculty. The most powerful thing we had to offer kids was this powerful group of adults.

But if everybody had to teach the same curriculum imposed from above, and the schedule was imposed from above, then very few of the advantages would go along with the size. That's why I've always had trouble with the idea that you could mandate that a school break into three small schools.

Which is what happened at one of the Oakland schools I just visited.

MEIER: Not a good idea. If you don't have in mind giving the faculty power, you are going to have a mediocre small school, and then people will start criticizing these schools, as is now beginning to happen, and the fad will be over.

Seeds of Learning

Lessons take root in an outdoor classroom, where fresh air leads to new thinking.

BY MARY ELLEN FLANNERY

On a cloudless Alabama morning, it's hot enough to curl a kindergartner's hair, and yet the kids are still clamoring to go outside. With summer approaching, the classroom can't hold their interest—the indoor classroom, that is.

The outdoor classroom, on the other hand, is better than Channel One. It's fun. It's dirty. And it provides one of those sneaky educational experiences where students soak up all manner of lessons in animal and plant sciences without realizing they remain rooted in an environment of learning.

A little dirt under the nails and a turtle in the hand lead to lots of solid learning for **Peggy Long** (above) and her elementary students.

"Gently now, hold that green part, not too tightly," says special ed teacher Peggy Long. Squatting in the veggie patch, her class of third-graders at University Place Elementary in Huntsville gingerly support the spindly stem necks of the baby radishes they are planting.

"Don't bury it!" squeals one girl.

The radishes root near the cabbage, not far from the oak-leaf hydrangeas, a skip away from the reading bench. A little farther on, a red-slider turtle stretches its tiny nose toward the sun, while other envious students press their faces against a hallway window, wishing for their turn outside.

More than just a garden, this outdoor classroom is one of 2,200-plus state-certified Schoolyard Habitats. From Hawaii to Maine, there are wheelchair accessible nature trails, expansive butterfly gardens, bat houses, and gazebos. In Philadelphia, students harvest marigold and sunflower seeds for sale. A few miles north, they tap maple trees. Out West, in Idaho, students have built solar ovens for cooking and spied on sauntering moose.

With fewer kids walking to school and more spending their afternoons in front of a TV or computer screen, it often falls to educators to nurture a little nature-loving. Done right, an outdoor classroom will not only support a science curriculum, it will also cultivate students' interest in the outside world. If we want our children to solve our global warming and habitat degradation issues, they'll need to understand—and care about—the Earth.

But scientists also say the natural world, with its multisensory stimulation, helps rev up brain function, particularly in our youngest learners. And it's not just about science lessons. An outdoor classroom can seed a math or history assignment, spark a writing project, and bolster better behavior: At University Place, only the most mannerly students get to feed Nemo and Goldie—two residents of the cascading pond.

"It's all about ownership," says Long. Her students plant seeds, water sprouts, and carefully tend to every spotty leaf, and because "they had something to do with everything out here," she says, "they just love it."

THE URBAN JUNGLE

To Long, a farm girl born and raised on the red clay of Alabama, it seemed almost tragic that her students never saw plants growing outside of those green plastic supermarket pots. Huntsville is no Manhattan, but many of its poorest children still live in an all-asphalt world. Where do their greens come from? The grocery store, obviously!

Of course, it's not just low-income city kids who can't connect cabbage to coleslaw. But at Long's school, 98 percent of the children qualify for free or reduced-price meals, and most live in public housing projects. "I do have one fifth-grader whose mother gardens," she says, but she figured the rest needed her help.

When Long heard about the Alabama Wildlife Federation's efforts to support new outdoor classrooms—like their national brethren, they offer grants and assistance—the idea to create such a place didn't need to germinate for long. She immediately took it to her principal, who gave her an enthusiastic nod.

To see University Place's outdoor classroom now, you'd never guess it was just a mosquito-loving mud hole two years ago. Stuck between a classroom wing and a media center, it was a narrow corridor of dust in the winter and muck in the summer—no bigger than an 800-square-foot condo. Long's initial plans were modest. She figured on a garden where students could learn about things like photosynthesis. Maybe a pond too, so they could observe a habitat up close. But once she shared her vision with colleagues and local business owners, support was overwhelming.

The regional Resource Conservation and Development Council extended her efforts with a $4,600 grant, matched by University Place's retired librarian. Then, like any self-respecting teacher, Long went begging for more.

All told, she won about $7,000 in formal grants and a whopping $19,000 in other donations and turned the forgotten space into an unlikely Eden with a landscaped pond, drainage marsh, and more tomatoes than Taco Bell. But yes, if you forgo the landscape architect and automatic sprinklers, it can be done for less.

MEETING STANDARDS & MORE

At University Place, all teachers are welcome to use the classroom, and most do, depending on their interest. It has proved to be most valuable for science teaching—at each grade, specific outdoor tasks have been tied to the state's standards. The radish-planting third-graders, for example, see first-hand how plants use sunlight to grow. Meanwhile, fifth-graders have taken on a "producers and consumers" unit in the bog. (It was quite a lesson in consumption when the block's bad boy spider gulped down a dragonfly. "The kids were going nuts!" Long recalls.)

Eventually, these lessons will matter on an Alabama state science test—by 2007, the No Child Left Behind law requires all states to test mastery of specific science standards. Meanwhile, the outdoor classroom has still met Long's primary mission—to raise environmental awareness for her students.

And, on that hot spring day, Peggy Long gave the third-graders a final lesson on seedlings of all kinds.

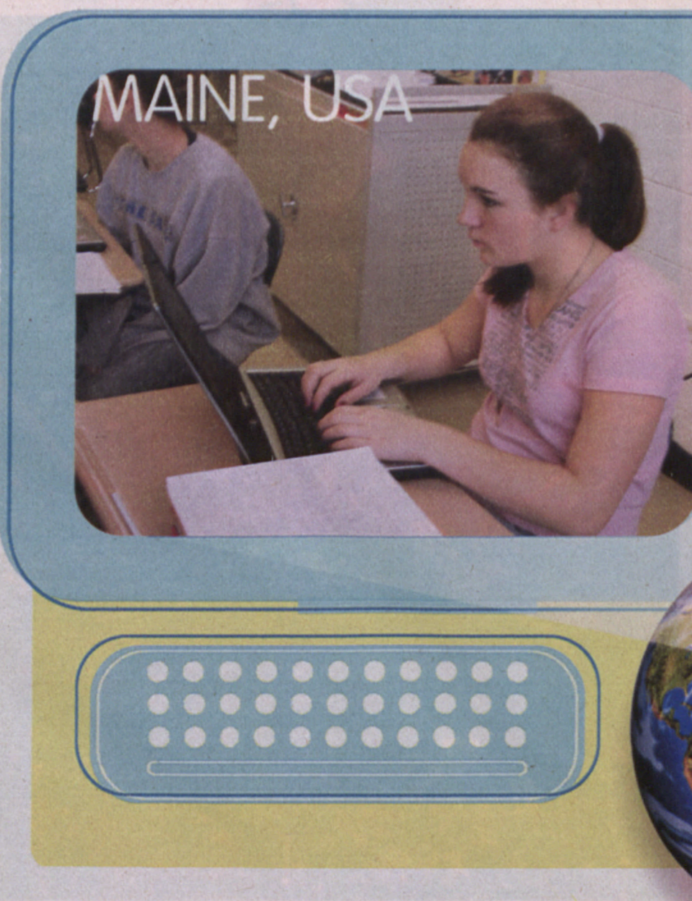
"Remember," she says, "they need room to grow." nea

Interested in creating an outdoor classroom at your school?

Here's how to get started:

1. **SET UP A COMMITTEE** of interested teachers, staff, and parents. An outdoor effort is easier to sustain if lots of people are committed to it.
2. **TALK TO CUSTODIANS AND GROUNDSKEEPERS.** You don't want to burden them with the care of the outdoor classroom, but they may have advice or interest.
3. **TAKE ADVANTAGE OF STATE AND FEDERAL RESOURCES.** Go to www.nwf.org/schoolyardhabitats/ for more how-to advice, plus information about grants and lesson plans.

PHOTOS: DAVID HUMBER



STUDENT EXCHA

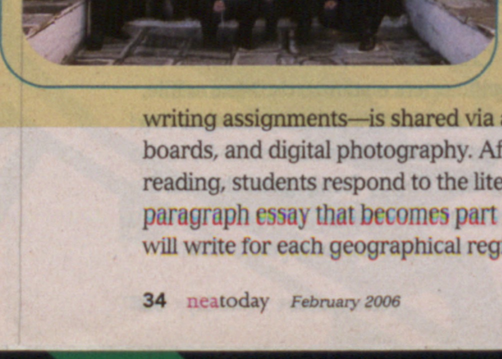
Use the Internet to enrich lessons and connect your students to peers around the world.

BY CINDY LONG

It's halfway through first period on a Friday morning at Belfast High School in Belfast, Maine, and ninth-grader Chelsey Paradis stares musingly at her laptop screen. While many high school freshmen are thinking about weekend plans (or the lack thereof), Chelsey considers more worldly matters, such as whether expressing doubts about the future success of the Republic of Dagestan might seem insensitive to her online classmates who live there.

As students in a global classroom, currently studying the literature and geography of Eurasia, Chelsey and her classmates are connected via the Internet with peers in three ninth-grade English classes from different parts of the former Soviet Union—Azerbaijan, the Russian republic of Dagestan, and the city of Vladimir. Students on both continents have just finished reading a translated version of "My Native Tongue," by award-winning Dagestani poet Rasul Gamzatov. Their assignment is to write about whether the diversity of languages and culture found in the region will hurt its chances of success. Chelsey wants to be candid, but diplomatic. When writing for a worldwide audience, she has learned to choose her words carefully.

Presenting students with such challenges is part of the aim of the yearlong project, in which the kids in Maine and their Russian peers collaborate on writing projects. The curriculum—including literature readings, lesson plans, and writing assignments—is shared via a Web site, discussion boards, and digital photography. After completing an assigned reading, students respond to the literature with a two- or three-paragraph essay that becomes part of a longer, final paper they will write for each geographical region studied. The essays are also posted on the site's discussion board, called the Café, where the Eurasian and American students read and respond to each other's work.



By participating in this cross-cultural exchange, the American students can make deeper connections to the literature and develop a better understanding of the geographical areas they study—all through their communication with teens who live there. The Russian and Azeri students, who are learning English, can hone their language skills. Most important, the experience allows all students to knock down the walls of traditional classrooms and physical locations to challenge the stereotypes and preconceived notions they may have about each other.

The Maine class, team taught by three NEA members—special education teacher Michael Bailey, English teacher Gregory Applestein, and geography teacher Butch Richards—is conducted like an advanced course. "More than 50 percent of the students are learning disabled (LD), but this course is not about coloring maps," says Bailey, who started the global classroom with the help of Project Harmony, a nonprofit organization pursuing online engagement and cultural awareness between school-age children in Russia, Eastern Europe, and the United States. "Too often LD students aren't challenged to an appropriate level. The most rewarding experience of the global classroom has been to see those bright students shine in their ability to grapple with worldwide questions."

ILLUSTRATION: SHAKIROV; ILLUSTRATION COLLAGE: GROFF CREATIVE, INC.

DAGESTAN, RUSSIA

(Left) **Chelsey Paradis** (Above) In Dagestan, **Mikhail Nokhov** and his students visit the Global Classroom at an Internet café.

ANGE

GOING GLOBAL

Bailey first linked up with Project Harmony while visiting Azerbaijan as part of an American Councils on International Education program designed to create learning partnerships between U.S. and Eurasian schools. Project Harmony was housed in the same building as the American Councils, and soon Bailey was in the office of the Project Harmony director, sketching out his ideas on a piece of scrap paper about a shared curriculum between his students and a class in Azerbaijan. A few weeks later, with help from the Project Harmony technical staff, the global classroom Web site was launched.

Bailey believes that the partnership challenges his students and enriches their learning. "They're not just reading a report in front of the class, but exchanging ideas with peers from across the globe," he says. He adds that his students' writing skills—especially their grammar and spelling—have improved, because they know that the kids reading their work are not fluent in English.

Back in first period at Belfast High, Chelsey Paradis works on her essay for the Café. Soon after she begins writing, she raises her hand. "I don't think they're going to make it without being able to talk to each other," she says. "But I don't know how to say that without hurting their feelings."

"It makes it more difficult when you have an audience, that's one of the challenges," Bailey explains.

Chelsey seems undecided on her position, and while she mulls it over, her classmate, Jake Denham, posts his essay to the Café, concluding that "having a diversity of languages would hurt Russia's chances of revival."

Within his essay, he asks his Russian classmates for their insights: "How big of a problem is [the diversity of languages] for you? Is it hard to talk to people right now? Do you want to re-unite?"

Aishat Dedisheva is a student from the Dagestani class. Like the poet Gamzatov, she is Avar, which is the language she speaks at home. In Dagestan, which borders Chechnya, some 36 languages are spoken. According to legend, the horseman who rode across the world handing out languages threw a bagful into the mountain gorges of the Caucasus region and told the people to sort themselves out. To this day, they're still trying.

Most of the Dagestani students come to school knowing only their native tongue and must learn Russian as a second language before even beginning to learn English. While older generations fear the languages of their ancestors might be lost, the young people embrace Russian. Gamzatov, the students point out, falls somewhere in between.

"In his poem 'Native Tongue,' Rasul Gamzatov writes how he loves his mother tongue—the Avar language…and at the same time he loves the Russian language, the language of human intercourse in Dagestan and Russia," Aishat writes in the

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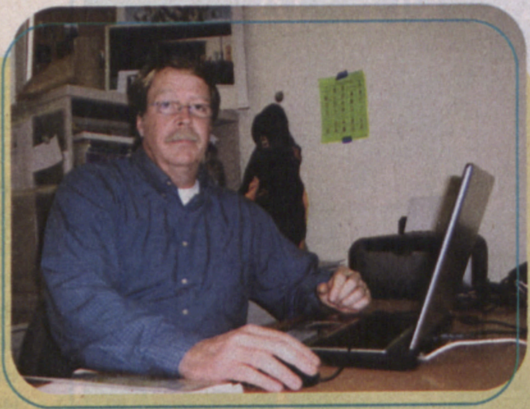
(Left) Students from Zagatala, Azerbaijan. (Above) Belfast High School English teacher **Gregory Applestein**.

Café. "I can say that the languages of two Avar villages not far from each other differ greatly and we understand each other with difficulty. So the Russian language is consolidating and serves to the success of the regions and Dagestan."



Michael Bailey's students connect online via the global classroom site at www.sad34.net/~globalclassroom/.

FINDING COMMON GROUND

Through the class—the only one of its kind at Belfast High—the ninth-graders stretch the boundaries of their experience and develop an awareness of the world largely unheard of 10 years ago in a small-town American school. Many of the Maine students have never traveled outside of New England, let alone to Russia.

"The global classroom experience not only helps kids grow as students of literature and geography, but also as human beings," points out Applestein.

Belfast High School student Joel Watson is in a band and wants to travel the world. He says the global classroom has opened his eyes and changed his perspectives about the people of the Caucasus region. "The kids in Dagestan are mostly Muslim, and after 9/11, a lot of us thought of Muslims as terrorists," Joel says. "But the kids there didn't know much about us either. They thought we were a bunch of greedy rich kids. Now we see we're really similar. We have a lot of the same struggles and even the same ideas."

> **"[STUDENTS] WILL LEARN** about many other things that they are interested in, not from the textbooks or from me, but from the American boys and girls who are the same age." —MIKHAIL NOKHOV

What surprised some of the Maine students was that their Muslim classmates confront the threat of terrorism on a daily basis. Armed guards stand watch outside schools to prevent attacks like the one on a school in Beslan in September 2004, when armed rebels held students and teachers hostage during a siege that killed nearly 350 people, half of them children. Meanwhile, Chechen separatists have infiltrated Dagestan in their efforts to break away from the Russian Federation. They're targeting police in shootings and trying to recruit supporters, sometimes from the area's high schools. Teachers, including the Dagestani global classroom teacher, Mikhail Nokhov, try to dissuade their students from joining the rebels. Nokhov hopes that fostering understanding among differing cultures will help his students resist such pressures.

The English teacher explains that he was eager to participate in the project after meeting Michael Bailey in July 2005 at a Cold War seminar in England. "We [became] friends and he invited me to take part in his global classroom," Nokhov says. "I agreed because it is useful for the students to have pen pals in an English-speaking country, which will make them pay more serious attention to learning English." Not only that, he adds, but "they will learn about many other things that they are interested in, not from the textbooks or from me, but from the American boys and girls who are the same age. I hope that it will…bring them closer in understanding."

Still, there are technical obstacles Nokhov faces. "We have no Internet access at the schools," he says. "The number of computers is limited and they are of an old type." His students either go to the Internet café in town or to his house after school to get online.

Project Harmony is determined to help teachers like Nokhov overcome technical limitations in Dagestan and across Russia. The organization has already made great progress in Azerbaijan. Through its Azerbaijan Connections and Exchange Program, funded in part by the U.S. State Department Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, Project Harmony has created "Internet Computer Centers" in 72 schools in 17 regions of Azerbaijan.

Shukufa Najafova, the English teacher in the global classroom's school in Azerbaijan, took advantage of the program. A year ago, Najafova had never used a computer. But with the help of a local English-speaking Peace Corps volunteer, Najafova submitted an application to Project Harmony and was awarded with six computers, a printer, scanner, digital camera, and high-speed Internet connection. Now she and her students are Internet whizzes, regularly contributing photos of themselves and their region to the Belfast High global classroom site and participating in Café discussions.

"None of this was possible before," Najafova says. "Now our school is connected with the world—we sit here and talk with America. It is so good for us." And, clearly, good for the American students too. nea

GET CONNECTED

Online resources to help link your classroom with the world:

Global SchoolNet Foundation
www.globalschoolnet.org

KidLink
www.kidlink.org

International Education Resource Network
www.iEARN.org

Project Harmony
www.projectharmony.com

For additional how-to tips, a video of students at work, and more, see www.neatoday.org.

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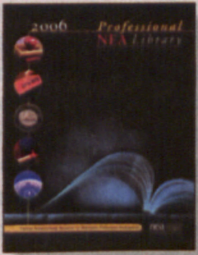

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Fixing Schools Isn't Everything

Education researcher David Berliner argues that school reform is only a part of the solution for closing the achievement gaps.

BY DAVID BERLINER

Do you know the story about the drunk man who loses his car keys? He's discovered under a streetlight, on his hands and knees, fumbling fruitlessly. Can't find the darn things! But when asked where he lost them, our sorry fellow points to a dim corner a block away.

"Why aren't you looking there?" he's asked. Answer: "The light is better here!"

And so goes the nation's efforts to reform education. Blindly, we've fumbled for years on federal stages such as the No Child Left Behind law, refusing to search up the block.

Over the last three years, I've co-authored three reports on the effects of high-stakes testing on curriculum, instruction, school personnel, and student achievement. They were all depressing. High-stakes testing has failed dismally in its intended goals. But these reports did make me wonder, what really could help?

Working on curricula and standards, improving teacher quality, and using technology are certainly helpful. But in the rush to embrace testing, our policymakers have forgotten, or can't understand, or are deliberately avoiding the truth about our children's lives. That is, they don't live at school.

I believe we need to peer into the darkness. If we did, we might see what sociologist Elizabeth Cohen saw quite clearly: Poverty is the 600-pound gorilla in the classroom.

I think we need to face that gorilla.

AN AMERICAN SHAME

The United States likes to be first, and when it comes to poor children, we maintain our remarkable status. No other wealthy nation in the world has a greater percentage of children living in poverty, except for Mexico. (And the average per capita income there is a whopping $8,900.) In Denmark, 2.4 percent of kids live in poverty, in Germany, 10 percent. Here, it's nearly 22 percent.

And surely, it's no surprise to hear poor children do worse in school. If the poor were set off as their own country, it would be a largely Black and Latino nation, and compared to other industrialized nations, it would score near the bottom of any academic ranking. Meanwhile, our White and wealthier students, were they a nation, would score up at the top with the likes of Japan and Sweden.

Thousands of studies have linked poverty to academic achievement. The relationship is every bit as strong as the connection between cigarettes and cancer. So why, when we have as much credible research making connections between poverty and school success, do we keep looking for other answers? (For example, it must be the low expectations of teachers!)

What's surprising is, in the face of that research, we still concentrate our attention and resources on what happens inside low-performing schools when the real problems are outside those schools.

POOR NEIGHBORHOODS

Here's what happens to a poor child with a recurring ear infection. He stays home, because his parents can't afford a doctor, and suffers hearing damage. What was that? I said he likely won't learn words efficiently, and will probably lag behind his classmates in reading.

Poor children suffer from a whole host of medical problems that their wealthier classmates often evade. These

days, asthma is an epidemic among the poor. In the South Bronx, a fourth-grade teacher reports that nearly a third of his students carry breathing pumps. They miss school—up to 40 days a year—and, of course, miss out on learning.

The list goes on and on. Even small amounts of lead can diminish a child's ability to learn and millions of children suffer lead poisoning annually. Do they have anything else in common? They're mostly children of color, living in contaminated, inner-city buildings.

PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

And it's not just the body that suffers, but the mind too. A "good" zip code can make a bigger difference than good parenting. Take two students in the same school with identical family backgrounds—the first lives among wealthy neighbors and the other among poor. The difference in their scores can be as much as the gap between the 10th and 90th percentile!

But move that child from the 'hood to the 'burbs, and watch his scores soar—a stunning effect that was well-documented when the Gautreaux program began moving families out of inner-city Chicago in the early 1970s.

Yes, family involvement and school programs can help and yes, of course, they should be supported. But other adult role models obviously mean a lot. Strong peer influences mean a lot. The availability of well-paid jobs, decent housing, greater stability, and higher expectations all mean a lot.

HOW TO HELP

Obviously one way to help schools would be to weave low-income housing into more middle class zip codes. But we are an economically segregated country, often by choice. Another way would be to ensure that poor people have access to better-paying jobs.

In a remarkable 2001 study, researchers followed families for three years, taking note of parents' income and children's scores. When income went up, for whatever reason, so did test scores. In those lucky families, children ended up scoring as well as the students who never were poor! From this, it's not unreasonable to conclude that rising incomes provide families with dignity and hope and, in turn, with greater stability and childcare.

Raising a family's income by $13,000 a year is estimated to improve children's IQ significantly, and also to reduce bad behavior. At that rate, raising income is a less costly strategy to closing the gaps than the annual cost per-child in Head Start! It is impossible not to wonder how society might benefit if all families had access to high-quality early childhood programs and adequate incomes.

So what can you and I do? When we push for higher qualifications for teachers of the poor, as we should, we also should push ourselves to stop shopping at companies like Wal-Mart, which doesn't provide the pay or medical insurance needed to promote healthy families. They have a terrible record in their treatment of mothers, and they're a major impediment to school reform.

When we push for professional development and mentoring programs for teachers, push for a raise in the minimum wage too—better yet, for a living wage for all. And when we demand college-prep curricula for all, also demand medical coverage for all. Argue for affordable housing! Fight for an economically equitable society!

All I'm saying is, I'm tired of acting like schools, all alone, can fix everything. As political economist Jean Anyon put it, "Attempting to fix inner-city schools without fixing the city…is like trying to clean the air on one side of a screen door."

It does take a whole village to raise a child, and we actually know a bit about doing that. What we seem not to know in America is how to "raise" the village so that all of our children prosper. nea

David Berliner is a Regents' Professor in the College of Education at Arizona State University. This is an abridged version of his essay, "Our Impoverished View of Educational Reform," published in the August 2005 online edition of *Teachers College Record.* To read the complete essay, go to www.asu.edu/educ/epsl/EPRU/documents/EPSL-0508-116-EPRU.pdf.

Answering the Call

THE HISTORY OF THE NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

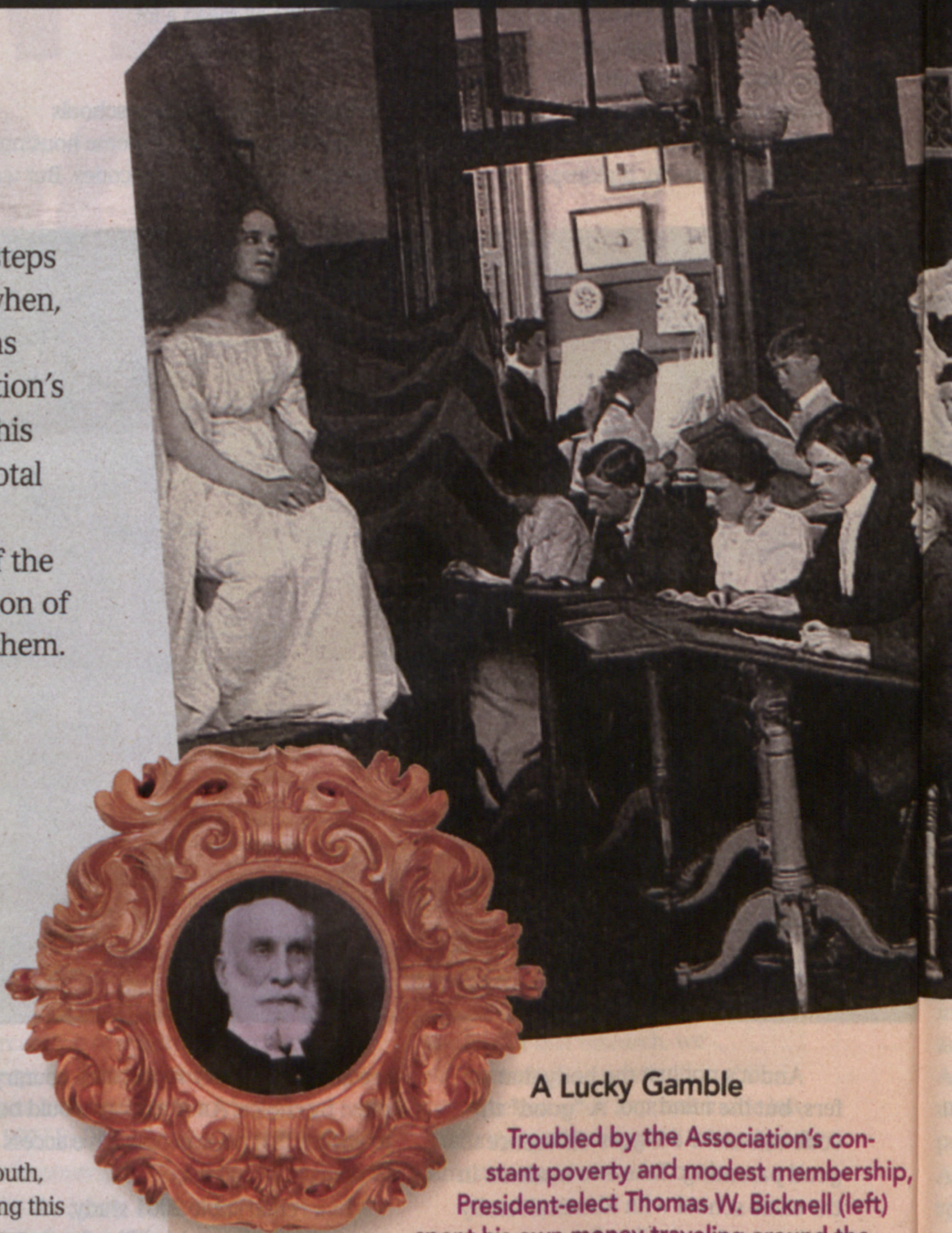
BY SABRINA HOLCOMB

In last month's issue, we witnessed the first wobbly steps taken by a fledgling NEA, when, in 1857, 10 state Associations issued "The Call" for the nation's educators to unite. In part two of this four-part series, we look at the pivotal role the Association played from Reconstruction through the turn of the century, advocating for the education of all children and those who taught them.

After the War

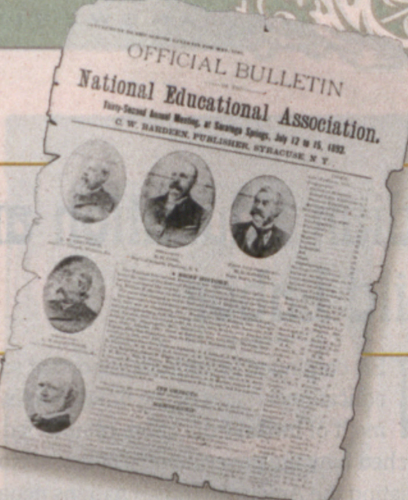
When the Civil War ended in 1865, the hard work of Reconstruction began for the nation and for its educators. Black and White teachers from the North and South worked to teach newly freed slaves of all ages, as grandparents and their grandchildren sat side by side, learning to read and cipher.

Literacy was so linked to freedom that emancipated slaves were the first to campaign for universal, state-supported schools in the South, a movement many Southerners opposed. During this time, NEA—then known as the National Teachers Association (NTA)—sought federal aid to help Southern states rebuild their school system and educate the emancipated population. In 1867, the NTA won its first major legislative victory when it successfully lobbied Congress to establish a federal Department of Education to provide and regulate education in the coming years.



A Lucky Gamble

Troubled by the Association's constant poverty and modest membership, President-elect Thomas W. Bicknell (left) spent his own money traveling around the nation, promoting the 1884 convention in Madison, Wisconsin. Bicknell met with the press wherever he went, extolling the virtues of NEA and the beauties of the host city. He also persuaded the railroad to offer deeply discounted rail fares to Madison, collect NEA dues, and distribute 100,000 copies of a 16-page pamphlet on NEA and Madison. It worked! The 1884 convention drew more than 5,000 educators, launching a significant membership and financial breakthrough for NEA.



OFFICIAL BULLETIN

National Educational Association.

Thirty-Second Annual Meeting, at Saratoga Springs, July 12 to 15, 1892.

C. W. BARDEEN, PUBLISHER, SYRACUSE, N. Y.

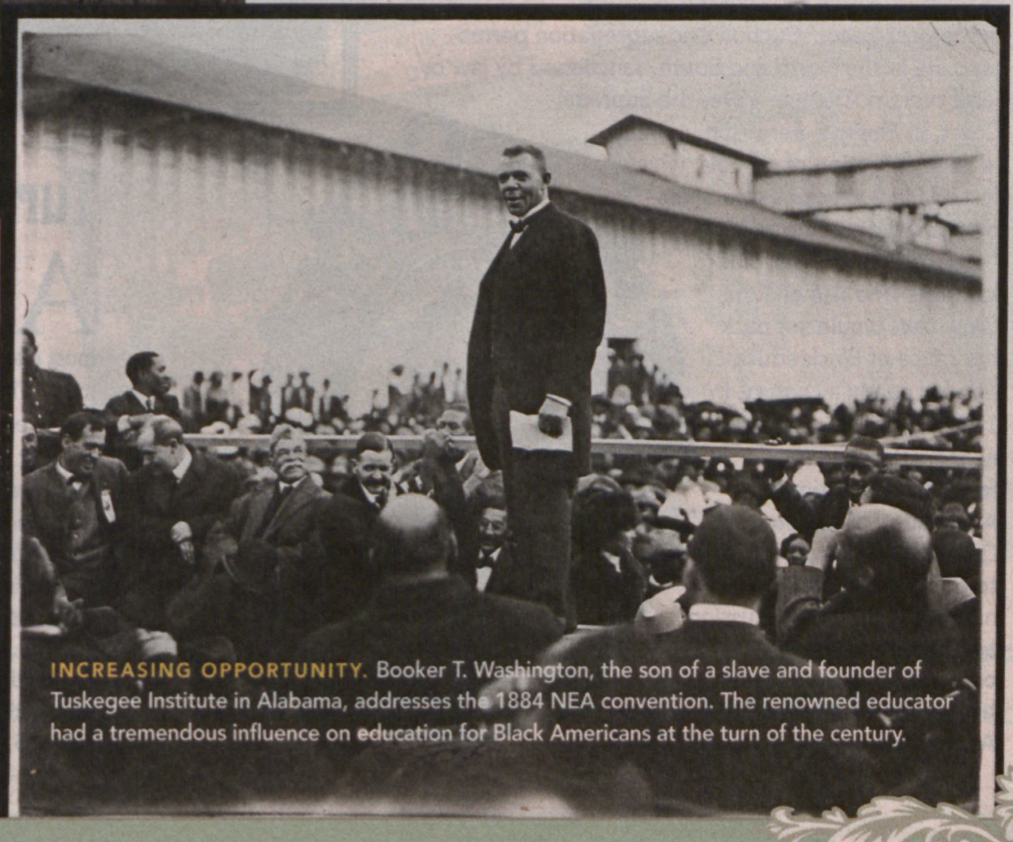
EXTENDING EDUCATION. NEA created "The Council of Ten" in 1892 to recommend a program of instruction for secondary schools.

ART WORK. (Above) High school students in Washington, D.C., study drawing. In the late 1800s, few adolescents attended secondary school; those who did were usually from affluent families. Circa 1900.

The Spirit of Change

Ironically, even though the NTA had been open to minority educators from day one, women had been barred from joining. With the end of the War, however, came a new spirit of egalitarianism that led NTA members in 1866 to open membership to "persons," rather than just "gentlemen." Despite the low wages, overwork, and other challenges of the profession, female teachers had more autonomy than practically any other group of women in the 19th century, although many states still had laws barring married teachers. In 1869, just three years after NTA membership was opened to women, Emily Rice became Vice President of the Association—the first woman elected to NTA office.

The very next year, NTA became the National Education Association by absorbing three smaller organizations: the American Normal School Association, the National Association of School Superintendents, and the Central College Association. As a new century began, the growing Association would have a profound impact on education in America.



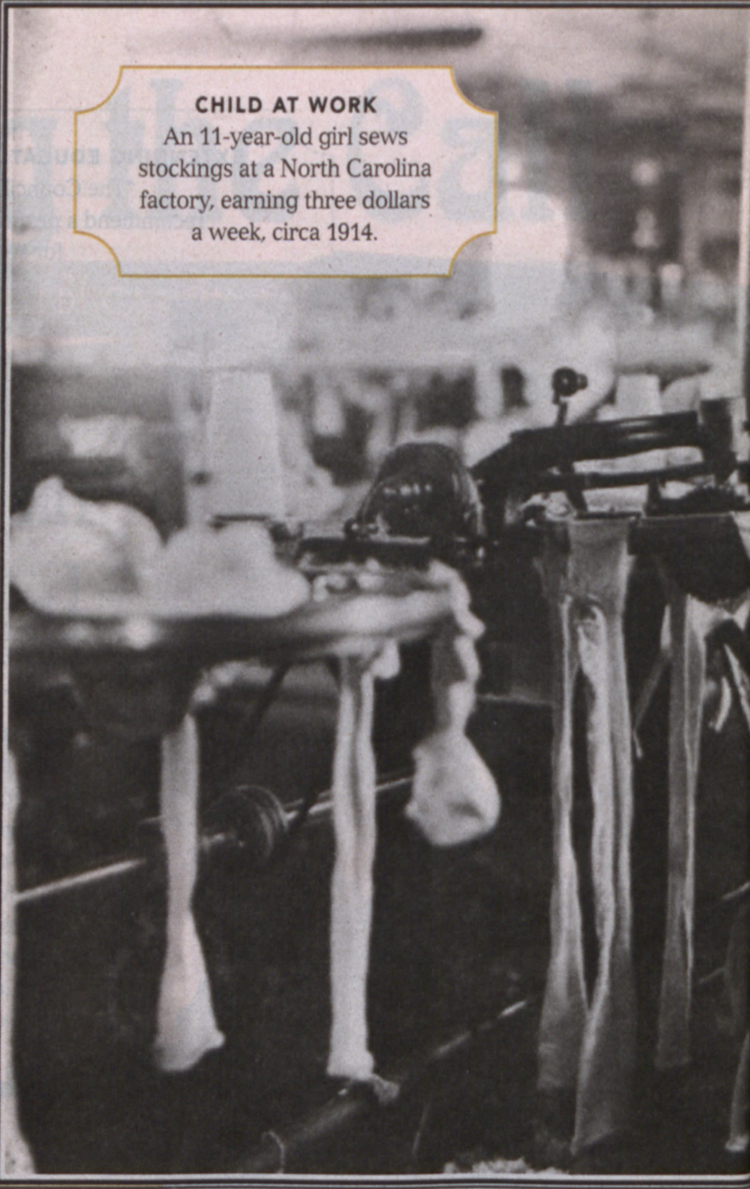
INCREASING OPPORTUNITY. Booker T. Washington, the son of a slave and founder of Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, addresses the 1884 NEA convention. The renowned educator had a tremendous influence on education for Black Americans at the turn of the century.

PORTRAIT LEFT: NEA ARCHIVES; PHOTOS CENTER: CORBIS; TOP AND BOTTOM RIGHT: NEA ARCHIVES

Indian Education and Child Labor

NEA continued to address important societal and educational issues of the times. NEA's Department of Indian Education, established in 1899, researched how the government's policy of isolating and assimilating the American Indian nations negatively impacted their education. Indian children attended White-run reservation schools, or boarding schools, where they were systematically stripped of their language and culture. Lessons focused on vocational skills and American patriotism.

Child labor was another priority for the Association. Deeply concerned about the disruptive influence child labor had on the health and education of children, NEA worked for years to enact state and federal prohibitions against using children in industry; the address at NEA's 1905 convention was devoted to this topic. In the decades to come, the combination of compulsory schooling and child labor laws had a huge influence on the number of American children receiving an education.



CHILD AT WORK
An 11-year-old girl sews stockings at a North Carolina factory, earning three dollars a week, circa 1914.

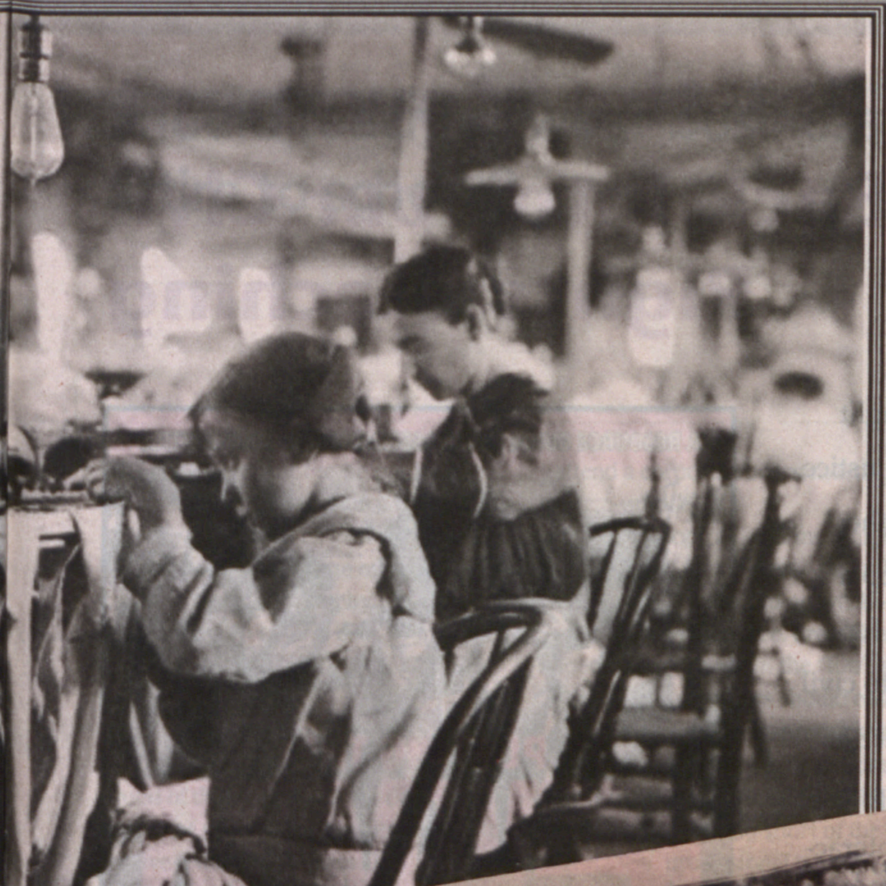
The Birth of the American Teachers Association

In the post-Reconstruction era, segregation permeated life in the North and South, sanctioned by law or local custom. Then, in 1896, the Supreme Court, in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, upheld legal segregation of schools, which forced Black teachers into a desperate struggle to provide "equal" resources for Black students. The rise of Jim Crow laws would set back the cause of Black education for nearly a century. In 1904, J.R.E. Lee, a prominent Black educator, founded the National Association of Teachers in Colored Schools (NATCS) to offer Black teachers a national forum for discussing and addressing their concerns. NATCS would later become the American Teachers Association.

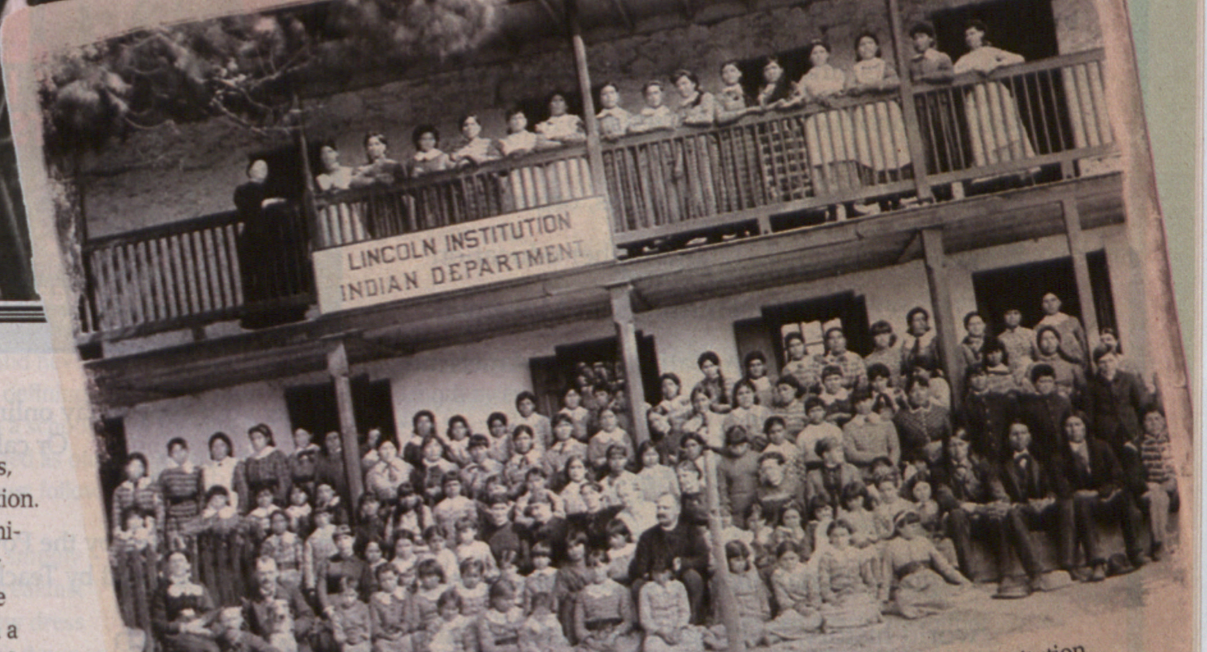
Turning Fifty

At the turn of the century, teachers were still struggling with perennial issues: salaries remained under $50 a month in most places, and women were still paid less than men. Within their classrooms, teachers often had to educate more than 60 students with little support. At the 1903 NEA convention, fiery Margaret Haley, a Chicago teacher, led a demonstration to bring attention to the need for improving the lot of classroom teachers. In response, NEA created a national committee and allocated funds to work on improving teacher salaries, tenures, and pensions.

By the time NEA celebrated its 50th birthday in 1907, the Association had grown to represent 5,044 educators across the nation. But



TEACHER'S ADVOCATE. (Above) Ella Flagg Young became NEA's first female president in 1910, a full decade before women gained the right to vote.



FORCED ASSIMILATION. Students and teachers assemble outside of the Lincoln Institution, an Indian Girls' School in Pennsylvania, circa 1884. Children as young as six were sent to boarding schools to "unlearn" their native culture.

members were preoccupied by an internal debate: For the first 50 years, administrators had led the organization. As classroom teachers began to dominate the membership, however, they pushed for a greater voice within the Association and in the workplace. In a speech that year, Ella Flagg Young, who would become NEA's first female president, said: "If the public school system is to meet the demands which 20th century civilization must lay upon it, the isolation...of teachers from the administration of the school must be overcome...can it be true that teachers are stronger in their work when they have no voice in planning the great issues committed to their hands?"

Next Month THE VOICE OF NEA IN THE 20TH CENTURY

PORTRAIT LEFT: NEA ARCHIVES; PHOTOS CENTER AND BOTTOM RIGHT: CORBIS; TOP RIGHT: NEA ARCHIVES

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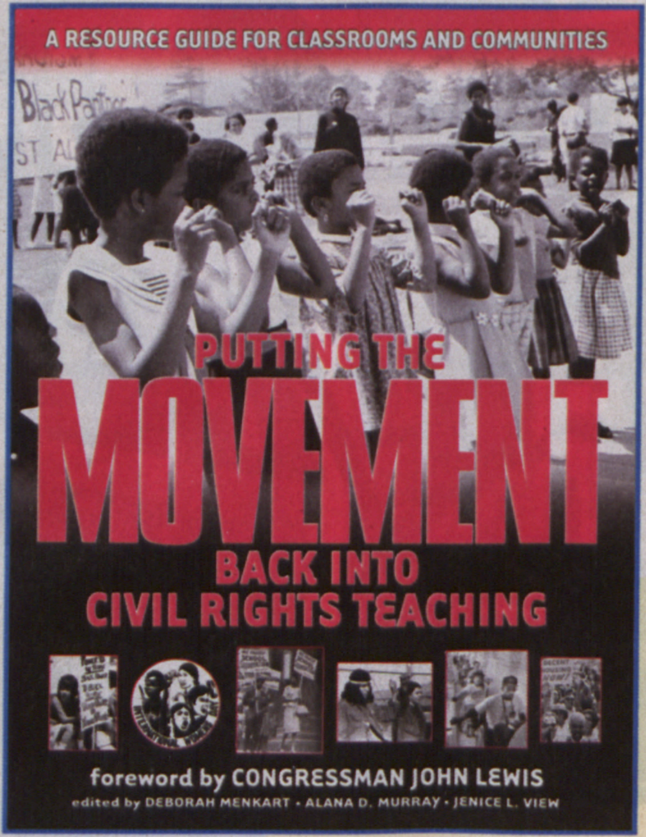
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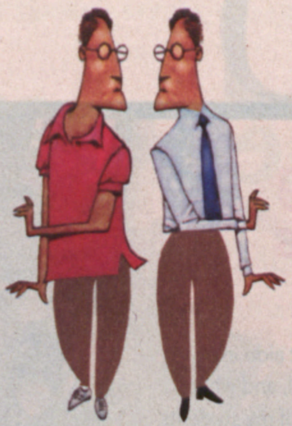
Should teachers wear business attire to school?



[YES]

If educators want to be paid and treated as professionals, we should carry ourselves as professionals. An already tarnished image of public education is further sullied by teachers who choose to enter a classroom dressed for a day at the beach or for yard work.

Business attire in the classroom portrays an image of an educator who is proud of the work he or she does. What degree of respect can teachers expect to receive if they don't dress like adult role models intent on providing the very best education for their students? Would a doctor see patients in shorts and a T-shirt? Would an attorney enter a courtroom with flip-flops and Capri pants? Would a businessperson attend a corporate board meeting in a warm-up suit?

Our school, as with most high schools, has theme days—pep rally Fridays and homecoming week—when casual, or even bizarre, dress is encouraged. However, when the "fun" is over, school administrators should ensure that the faculty dress appropriately for the classroom. The job of an administrator is to create a culture at a school that accepts nothing short of the most professional behavior. Appropriate dress is not the only quality of professionalism, but it is the most conspicuous.

Evaluation instruments should include sections on professional dress. Warm-up suits, jeans, Birkenstocks, T-shirts, and Hawaiian print shirts are the daily attire of a few members of our faculty. High school students are mature enough to see hypocrisy. If students are required to meet an appropriate standard of dress, why aren't educators?

If educators are ever to enjoy the respect of the public and the compensation we deserve, let's start with something we can control. Let's outwardly show our pride in our profession by implementing dress codes for teachers.

RAY WATERS teaches English at Gulf Breeze High School in Gulf Breeze, Florida.

WHAT'S YOUR OPINION?

Should teachers wear business attire to school?
To vote, visit our Web site at www.nea.org/neatoday and see the results instantly.

Should teachers eat lunch with their students?
The tally on the question in the last *NEA Today:* 38% Yes 62% No

Should all children attend preschool?
If you'd like to take part in this future Debate, send a brief note to Cindy Long, **clong@nea.org**.

[NO]

Form follows function and never is that more true than in defining "professional attire" in a school setting. Our duties are as varied as our job descriptions and attire must follow accordingly.

I will not forget the day I smugly walked down the hall after breakfast duty, proudly wearing my new dress pants and blouse, only to look down to see the label from a student's breakfast syrup container stuck to my pants. I've also learned that the red paint used in lower grades bonds permanently to better clothing.

My vest of bright green fabric depicting construction tractors might not portray the most professional air, but it stimulates children to talk. The merits of each tractor and brand have been described at length by even the quietest child. These were students who had been shy and uncertain of themselves. The vest got them talking.

Weaving dog and cat buttons into my shoelaces would not make a favorable impression in the corporate world, but it entertains young children who sit on the rug for a story.

My winter coat must lie either on a chair or on the floor because no closet or coat rack is available. Even those fortunate enough to have closets find them so full the doors won't close. Therefore, we wear washable work jackets.

I allow school spirit to override stereotyped professionalism when I wear the sweatshirts that are gifts from the wrestling team and coach. The gift of popular clothing is priceless and wearing these items tells team members, "You are important."

When choosing how we will dress our primary thought must be for our children and the tasks we do. We should not select clothing to make a fashion statement. Clothing is part of our curriculum.

EILEEN ELROD is a guidance counselor for Grayson County Schools in Virginia.

ILLUSTRATION: TED PITTS

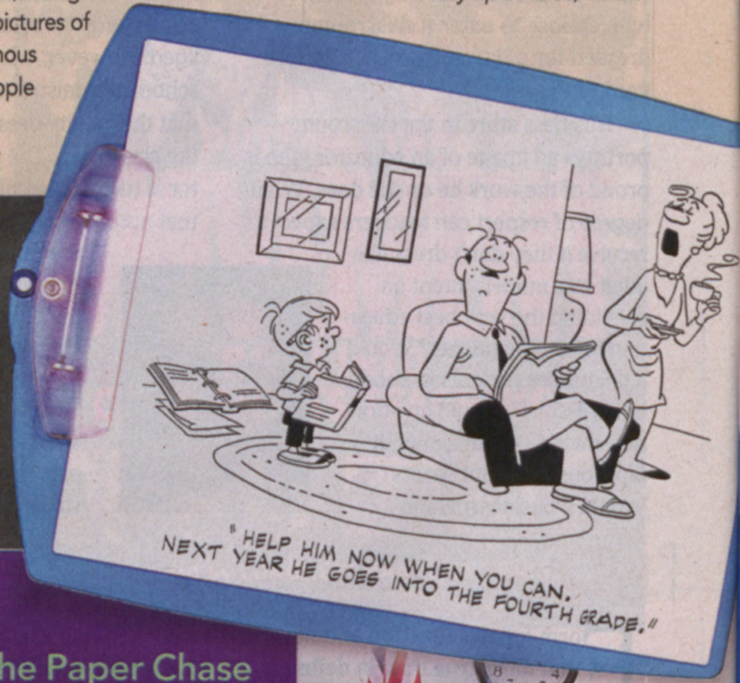
Making Glasses Cool

I'm a Reading First aide in an elementary school, and when I noticed that one of my students who needed his glasses to see didn't always wear them, I came up with the concept of The Paul Revere Glasses Club.

To my amazement, 65 children showed up for our first meeting. Children who wear glasses are often ridiculed, so we talked about why we wear glasses and what we should say if someone makes fun of us. We also talked about how to care for our eyewear. I gave each student a packaged swab, and we all cleaned our glasses together as a group. We even came up with a signal to greet friends who wore glasses when we saw them in the hallway.

During subsequent meetings, we read a book about eye problems, brought in pictures of famous people or friends who wore glasses (Harry Potter is a good example!), and drew self-portraits that we hung in the front hallway of the school. And, as you can see in the photo, I also brought as many funny glasses as I could find for us to wear at each meeting. A simple idea, but The Paul Revere Glasses Club helped my students gain self-esteem and a vision for the future.

LYNNE SPEAKER
Olympia Fields, Illinois



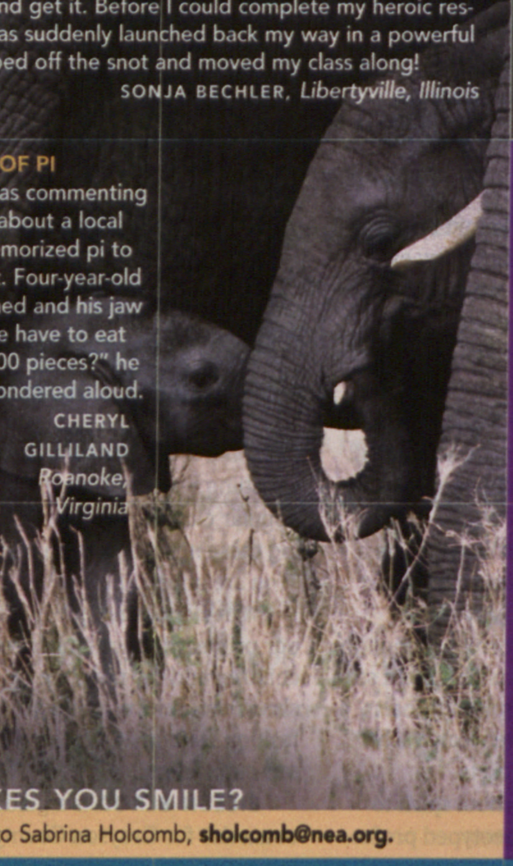
"HELP HIM NOW WHEN YOU CAN. NEXT YEAR HE GOES INTO THE FOURTH GRADE."

TICKLED

ALL IN A DAY'S WORK

On a field trip to the zoo, a baby elephant sucked up the red glove of one of my students. I sized up the elephant as being no larger than a cow, and, having grown up on a farm, decided to hop in the pen and get it. Before I could complete my heroic rescue, the glove was suddenly launched back my way in a powerful sneeze. I just wiped off the snot and moved my class along!

SONJA BECHLER, *Libertyville, Illinois*



THE MEANING OF PI

My co-teacher was commenting on a news story about a local boy who had memorized pi to the 7,000th digit. Four-year-old Will's eyes widened and his jaw dropped. "Did he have to eat all 7,000 pieces?" he wondered aloud.

CHERYL GILLILAND
Roanoke, Virginia

WHAT MAKES YOU SMILE?

Send a fun story to Sabrina Holcomb, **sholcomb@nea.org.**

The Paper Chase

I need advice on ways teachers can streamline their administrative duties and paperwork. I love to teach, or used to, but the past few years have turned teaching into a managerial nightmare. There's always homework to correct, granted, but now teachers shoulder more administrative duties. Neither my filing system nor stress level can handle the additional assessments and analyses, grade-level data collection and analyses, extra handouts (daily at times), data reports, and more! What can we do?

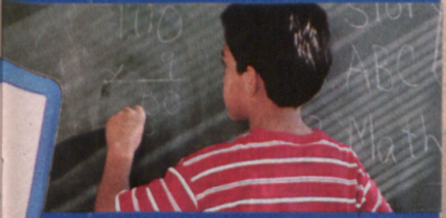
CONNIE GAUVIN
Bristol, Connecticut

PHOTO TOP LEFT: CARL FERRARO; ELEPHANT PHOTO: PHOTO 24; PIE PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES; CARTOON: GEORGE CRENSHAW; PHOTO ABOVE: NATHAN HAM

Take One Box

I have a box labeled "Take One" that students can see when they first enter the classroom. If there is something in the box, students know to take one before they sit down. The box eliminates both the time spent passing out papers and the problem of placing papers at desks where no student sits when they're distributed before students arrive. This system also increases student responsibility, and it gives students something to do or read as soon as they sit down. Even better: I no longer hear, "But you didn't give me one!"

ROBBIE SCHWEERS
Soledad, California



Conversion Clue

When I taught general math and pre-algebra, my students had difficulty converting decimals and percents back and forth. To help them keep the conversion straight, I had them write "d2p" at the top of their papers. When converting from one to the other, they put their finger on their starting unit d ("decimal") and moved their fingers to the other p ("two places"). The finger movement also showed them the direction in which to move the decimal point.

LOUIS BRZEZINSKI JR.
Columbia, Maryland

Recess Passes

I like to check my students' progress as they're working, so I made up bookmark-size laminated passes to hand out to students who have finished an assignment. When it's time for recess, only those students who have their passes can go outside. I also use passes to remember whose desk has passed "desk check." Passes can be collected and re-used.

DARLENE ROKER
Los Angeles, California

BURIED TREASURE

Any suggestions for really inexpensive items to put in a classroom treasure chest?

BARBARA ROTH
Kingston, Massachusetts

ANSWER: You can get scads of freebies at conventions and exhibits, and they're extra generous if you tell them you're a teacher. Kids love school supplies, such as scotch tape, metallic pencils, and tiny notepads. Party favors are great too.

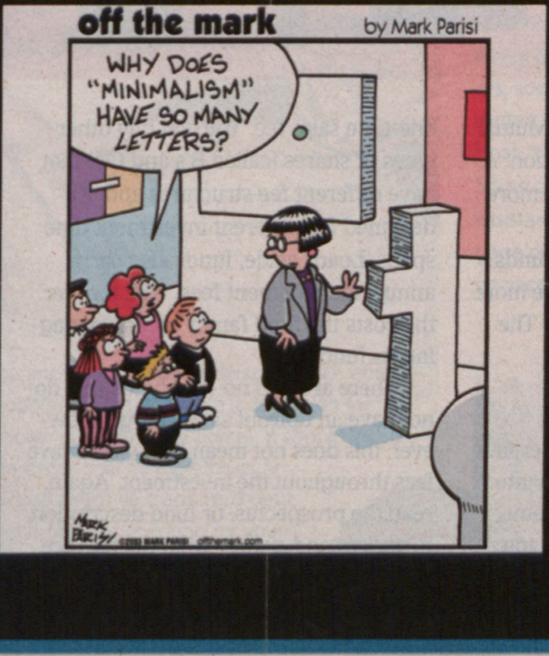
EVELYN HERSCHLER
Olney, Maryland

ANSWER: I ask parents, kids, and friends with kids to donate little toys they don't use or need anymore. I also shop at the thrift store for bags of toys that are consigned. You can get about 15 little toys for one dollar.

PAM LEHMANN
Baumholder, Germany

ANSWER: I buy items that appeal to my teenage students—such as sunglasses, disposable cameras, candy, stationery, and small photo albums—at the dollar store or the one dollar section of the big convenience stores. I also use prizes from fast food restaurant kid meals.

LINDA WIGGS
Chana, Illinois


off the mark
by Mark Parisi
WHY DOES "MINIMALISM" HAVE SO MANY LETTERS?
MARK PARISI
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Share your wisdom, ask your question!

What's the funniest thing that ever happened in your classroom?

Send your answers to these or other questions on this page to **sholcomb@nea.org**. Or, send us a question or photo you'd like to see posted. Please include your name, your job, and the community and state where you work.

For a weekly e-mail of questions, answers, and practical classroom tips, join Works4Me, one of NEA's most popular and useful services. Just send the message "subscribe Works4Me" (without the quotation marks) to **Lyris@list.nea.org**.

PHOTO ABOVE: GETTY IMAGES; TREASURE PHOTO: RYAN MCVAY; PARTY FAVOR PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES; SUNGLASSES PHOTO: STEPHEN WISBAUER; CARTOON: MARK PARISI

The Feeling is Mutual

Pool your dough and watch it grow.

BY SELENA MARANJIAN

Have you ever stopped to think about how great mutual funds are? Didn't think so. Few of us have the time, interest, or know-how to dissect the stock and bond markets, looking for the investments that might lead to riches. That doesn't mean we have to rely on lottery tickets as a retirement strategy though. Instead, there are mutual funds, probably available in your workplace's retirement plan, and which you can invest in on your own too.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Buying into a mutual fund essentially means you're pooling your money with lots of other folks and hiring some experienced people to manage it. There are many different niches you can zero in on with mutual funds. Some funds focus on large companies, some on small. Some invest only in foreign companies, some only in municipal bonds, and others only in energy companies. Mutual funds also offer instant diversification. A typical stock mutual fund will own more than a hundred different stocks.

With more than 8,000 mutual funds out there, you can be sure there are more than a few that will serve you well. The key is knowing how to find them.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

When shopping for a fund, consider first which asset category the fund falls into, such as large cap value, equity income, international equity, investment grade corporate bonds, government bonds, etc. The category is often included in the fund's name. When you see the word "equity," this typically means stocks, whereas "fixed income" means bonds. Generally speaking, stocks tend to be more volatile than bonds, but over long periods of time, they tend to outperform bonds too.

If you see a "load" mentioned, that's a sales charge. A front end load (also called an A share), will typically reduce your investment by around 5 percent. So investing $3,000 means $150 will be deducted when you invest. This is a one-time sales fee. You can buy other types of shares (called B's and C's) that have different fee structures and are designed for different investment time spans. Loads aside, funds also carry annual management fees, which cover the costs the fund family incurs managing its funds.

There are also no-load funds that do not have an upfront sales charge. However, this does not mean they won't have fees throughout the investment. Again, read the prospectus, or fund description, to understand exactly what the fees are for each fund you may be considering.

You may also want to look into index funds that follow the broad market (for example, S&P 500 Index or Total Stock Market Index). If the market heads up, they go up. If the market takes a dip, they do too. They generally have lower expenses because fund management involves investing only in the securities of the index.

WANT TO AIM HIGHER?

To aim higher than the market average, seek managed funds with long, strong track records. Always keep in mind that past performance does not guarantee future results. The stock market has returned about 10 percent per year, on average, over most of the past century. Some outstanding mutual funds have long-term averages topping 12 percent and even 14 percent. If you earn 10 percent annually on a $10,000 investment over 20 years, you'll end up with about $67,000. Up the return to 12 percent, and you'll top $96,000. The best place to research mutual funds online is at www.Morningstar.com/Cover/Funds.html.

Whenever investing in mutual funds, consider putting your money in a diversified portfolio. That gives you a balance of equity and fixed income funds that can help smooth out the ups and downs of the marketplace. Determine the exact balance of those investments by gauging your own tolerance for investment risk and the length of time that you want to invest. Younger investors with lots of time ahead may be best served by focusing more on stocks, while investors nearing retirement might want to add more bonds for balance.

ILLUSTRATION: ROB COLVIN

It's Time to Snoop—On Yourself!

Another report card to review, but this one's about you.

Not many things in life are free—but thanks to recent legislation, peeks at your credit report finally are. All Americans are now entitled to a free copy of their credit report from each of the national credit-monitoring agencies, once per year. Don't assume that this is a ho-hum development. Your credit rating affects many parts of your life. If you need to borrow money to buy a car or a home, lenders will be checking out your credit history. These days, insurers, landlords, and even some prospective employers have taken to looking at credit ratings.

You should be looking at your credit report too—to check for errors or signs of foul play. If your identity is stolen or someone is using credit under your name, you'll likely see signs of this activity on your credit report.

Since there are three main reporting agencies (Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion), consider getting your annual freebie from one of them every four months. That way, you'll be able to review your record fairly frequently throughout each year. (Note that each agency might have different information on you.)

To request your free reports, click over to www.annualcreditreport.com (be sure to spell it correctly, or you may end up at a fraudster's site) or call 877-322-8228. Once you get your copy, make sure that all the information on it is correct. Be thorough. The report should include information on how to have errors corrected.

Learn more at www.ftc.gov/bcp/conline/edcams/freereports/index.html.

For Richer, Not Poorer

Put 'share financial goals' on the to-do list before the 'I do' day.

So, you've decided to head down the aisle toward wedded bliss. Congratulations! With some planning and a little discipline, you and your sweetie can enjoy a life together that's richer in many ways, including financially.

Communication is critical for success. Make sure you and your partner understand each other's ambitions and dreams along with your goals as a couple. Come up with a master plan for reaching these goals (such as saving enough for a down payment on a home). It should involve regular saving and investing, but shouldn't eliminate occasional treats, such as an evening out or a vacation. Discuss your views on subjects such as credit card debt, savings, investments, shopping, splurging, etc. Make a point of checking on your financial progress together regularly—perhaps once per month or quarter.

LEARN MORE IN THESE BOOKS: *Smart Couples Finish Rich* by David Bach and *The Family CFO* by Mary Claire Allvine and Christine Larson.

www.neamb.com

The Five Commandments of Budget Travel

Honor thy wallet with a little careful planning.

1. THOU SHALT RESEARCH THY VACATION. You can get the scoop on countries and cities at your library or online. Punch vacation spots and travel companies into a search engine such as Google.com and learn more about them. You can also look up information on airlines, cruise companies, and vacation companies. Find out when your destination's off-season is—travel is often cheaper then.

2. THOU SHALT COMPARISON-SHOP FOR GOOD DEALS. Sign up at airline Web sites and they'll e-mail you about special deals. You can compare rates for flights, hotels, and car rentals at sites such as www.sidestep.com, www.expedia.com, www.orbitz.com, www.bnm.com, and www.cheaptickets.com. Just be sure to check a handful of such sites. None of them cover all the possibilities.

3. THOU SHALT CONSULT WITH AN EXPERT. A good travel agent can provide valuable advice and find you great deals.

4. THOU SHALT BE FLEXIBLE. If you can leave or return a day earlier or later, you might save a bundle. If you're ready to be "bumped" from a full flight, you can snag a free ticket.

5. THOU SHALT USE THY CREDIT CARD. Many credit cards offer special perks to travelers, such as free collision insurance on car rentals and free traveler insurance for bus, boat, train, or plane trips charged on plastic. Some cards even provide inexpensive roadside assistance and can help if you lose your luggage or need a doctor or lawyer referral while on vacation. See what your card offers.

ILLUSTRATION TOP: GEORGE UNDERWOOD; PHOTO ABOVE: THOMAS BARWICK; PHOTO RIGHT: DIGITAL VISION

3, 2, 1...Blast Off!

Dee Gibson gets a bang out of teaching, but her vacation is a real blast.

NOT MANY TEACHERS have to tack on a safety-oriented "Kids, don't try this at home" disclaimer when they tell their students what they did over the summer. But then, not many teachers are like Gibson, a first-grade teacher in Rockford, Illinois, who spends the summer setting off massive explosions.

As a member of a wife-and-husband-led pyrotechnics team, Gibson entertains thousands of people at air shows around the world each summer by setting off choreographed detonations. Using a carefully controlled mixture of dynamite, gasoline, and other explosives, her crew creates special effects on the ground that appear to air show viewers to be coming from the military planes flying overhead. She does everything from detonation to safety supervision while another blasting crew wows fans.

Several times Gibson helped the team break the Guinness World Record for the longest wall of fire.

Adventure has been a mainstay in Gibson's life. Raised in Milwaukee, she joined the Women's Army Corps after high school to see the world. She re-enlisted to earn enough money to fund her skydiving passion. Gibson ultimately ended up in the Army Combat Engineers, where she worked on bulldozers and blasted rocks with explosives to build roads in rural Honduras.

Once all in a day's work, the 20-year teaching veteran now shares her explosive summer vacation stories judiciously.

"When I taught second grade, I told the kids what I did and they asked, 'Can you bring in some bombs, Mrs. Gibson?' I got some interesting calls from parents," she laughs. "Now I explain it a little differently."

—PAT TERRY

Seeing History for the Trees

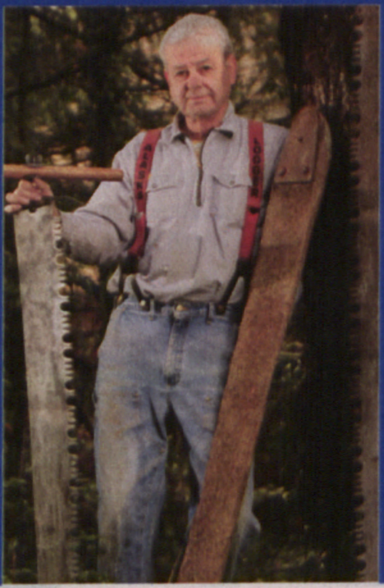
Once a logger, always a logger, says retired educator Merv Johnson of Beaverton, Oregon.

JOHNSON GREW UP IN OREGON logging camps in the 1940s, an era when giant "steam donkeys" powered the winches that dragged huge felled timbers from the forest by steel cable. Johnson, like his father, worked as a choker-setter, the logger assigned the hazardous task of cinching the end of a moving cable to a fallen tree.

"The old steam donkeys worked at only one speed, so when you set the choker on a tree, the donkey didn't wait for you to get your hands free of the cinch," says Johnson, a member of NEA-Retired-Oregon. "You worked on its schedule, so you worked fast."

But just as he came of age, the steam donkey was being replaced by gas-powered equipment. The donkey's disappearance led Johnson to change careers.

"I was traumatized," says Johnson. "I was in love with steam engines. I wanted to be a railroad engineer or to run a steam donkey. When steam went out, I had no more interest in working as a logger."



Johnson eventually became a high school industrial education teacher, but never lost his love for the steam era in logging. "Even before I retired, I started writing a book about the old equipment, and began to track down Oregon's remaining steam donkeys."

Today, preserving logging history is his full-time activity. He published his book, *In Search of Steam Donkeys*, has written numerous magazine articles, and has located 45 antique steam donkeys in old Oregon lumber camps.

Johnson has also compiled oral histories of dozens of loggers. Once a year, he demonstrates a working steam donkey for spectators.

"The old days of logging are an important part of Oregon history," says Johnson. "I want to see that history preserved."

—MATT SIMON

PHOTOS TOP: DAVID COSS; BOTTOM: CRAIG MITCHELLDYER

The Need for Speed

It's all about the thrill of speed for Camas, Washington, teacher Alisa Wise.

AS IF BEING A HIGH SCHOOL MATH TEACHER, a mother of four sons, and a football and track team coach isn't enough, even Wise's hobby makes the pace of James Bond's life pale in comparison. She spends her downtime racing vintage and modern motocross bikes.

Safety is her middle name though, not danger. While modern motocross racing can be dangerous, vintage racing is anything but, thanks to the older bikes and safer trails, she says.

Her husband piqued Wise's interest in the hobby when they were dating, and it remains a family affair to this day. She brings her sons to racing events so they can enjoy some quality time together. "We all hang out, eat food, and watch each other ride," says Wise. "Plus, I'm a firm believer in the fact that a family that plays together stays together." It's a deliberate effort to create long-lasting family memories, she says. "I lost my mom at a young age, so I have a really strong value for memories."

But sometimes it's just about the adrenaline, right? "It's a rush," Wise says. "It's addicting and I love the competitive spirit of it all."

While many of her students are also riders (Washington's rugged terrain is too tempting for many to resist), they are still often surprised to hear that their 38-year-old math teacher shares their passion. "I love to see their reaction," Wise says, adding that she doesn't expect time to dull her motocross escapades. "I see myself doing this for a very long time."

—RITU SHARMA

Educator Hip Hops To Help Students

South Carolina teacher Nikki Hunter turns social studies into a rapper's (and students') delight.

WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF HIP HOP artist Will Smith had a sideline seat at the Declaration of Independence's signing? Or if Kanye West recorded a soundtrack for the Industrial Revolution? Hunter, an elementary school teacher in Newberry, South Carolina, thought her students might be intrigued by her take on the answers.

She recorded an educational compact disc called "Hip Hop Hooks on American History," embracing the popular music genre. Her approach: make learning social studies fun by setting it to beats. Her songs on the CD include lessons on the three branches of government, the Industrial Revolution, expansion into the American West, and the civil rights movement. Call it *School House Rock* for the 21st century.

Two years ago, 87 percent of Hunter's class scored below grade level on the social studies portion of the state's standardized tests. She realized that while students loved hip hop music, they were less enchanted by social studies.

"I knew I had to do something," Hunter says. "I created it out of my own frustration. I figured if I could hook them on a catchy beat and chorus, I would be able to hook them on information as well."

Last year, she began testing songs with students while recording the CD after work. Even though it was only partially finished, 51 percent of her students scored at or above grade level during last year's standardized tests.

Now the CD is complete, and Hunter uses it in class. It's not meant as a substitute for other good teaching, but Hunter hopes the CD entices students to pay more attention to textbook readings, research, lectures, and discussions.

"It's definitely made a difference in my classroom," she says. "My students are now hooked on history."

—CECIL CAHOON

GOT A TIP?

Do you have an interesting story idea? Contact Cynthia Kopkowski, section editor, at **ckopkowski@nea.org**.

PHOTO TOP: JIM WISE; BOTTOM: CECIL CAHOON

feb'06

resources

53 **Grants & Awards** It's not easy to blaze trails! Students who are the first in their families to attend college can get support from Mercedes-Benz.
54 **NEA's Read Across America** A sneak peak at the 2006 Resource Kit.
54 **Heads Up from NEA Member Benefits** So you want to buy a house—are you *really* ready? Make sure you have all your ducks in a row.
56 **Take Note** Help soldiers stationed overseas stay in touch with loved ones.
56 **Diversity Calendar** Looking for Black History Month resources? Check out the vast collections at the Library of Congress.
59 **On TV** A compelling look at the life of a young German theologian hanged for his work in the Nazi resistance movement.
61 **On the Web** Learn about the history and drama of our nation's highest court.
61 **Books by NEA Members** Introduce students to author and poet Raymond Carver.
62 **In Print** Help students with learning disabilities be confident and likeable.

Summer Internships for Future Engineers

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS with an interest in engineering, technology, and naval science can apply for the Science and Engineering Apprenticeship Program (SEAP), an eight-week paid summer research and internship opportunity sponsored by the Office of Naval Research.

Internships are awarded annually to approximately 250 students, who work at any of 19 Department of the Navy laboratories throughout the United States. The stipend for the summer program is $1,500. Students must have completed ninth grade and be citizens to apply.

SEAP is administered by the American Society for Engineering Education. For more information, including a complete list of eligibility requirements and locations of participating laboratories, visit **www.asee.org/seap**. Questions may be sent to seap@asee.org. The application deadline is **February 17, 2006.**

POETRY AND THE POWER OF THE SPOKEN WORD

The National Endowment for the Arts (the *other* NEA) has teamed up with the Poetry Foundation to create Poetry Out Loud, an opportunity for high school students across the country to compete in a poetry recitation contest.

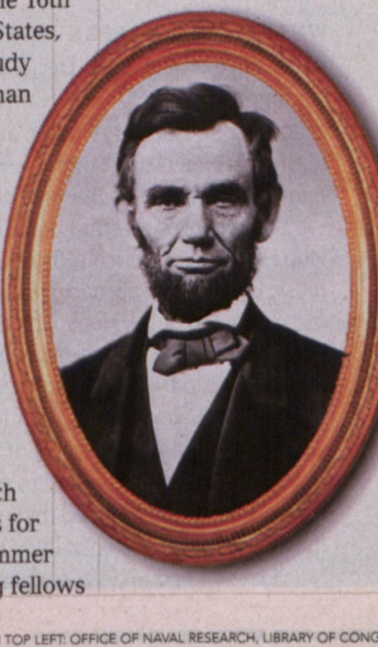
From January through March 2006, select schools in every state (identified by each state Department of Education) will compete in the official contest, beginning at the classroom level and advancing to school-wide, city-wide, and regional competitions, culminating with state finals in April. One winner from each state will proceed to the national finals on May 16. Fifty-thousand dollars in scholarships and school prizes will be awarded overall.

If you're interested in having your school participate, contact your State Arts Agency—but don't be discouraged if they've already chosen other schools. Any school can participate and conduct its own contest using the official online resources.

Visit **www.poetryoutloud.org** for information, a program guide, an extensive anthology of poems, tips on performance technique, audio-links, and other resources for students, educators, and arts administrators. Take advantage of this opportunity to introduce your students to the power of the spoken word.

RESOURCE: NEA's Read Across America has a great tip sheet for hosting a teen poetry slam. Find *Slam It! Stage It!* at **www.nea.org/readacross/resources/index.html**.

STUDY LINCOLN IN HIS HOME STATE



If you've ever admired the 16th President of the United States, here's your chance to study the life and legacy of a man many historians regard as the greatest president in our nation's history—at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum (ALPLM) in Springfield, Illinois.

A new program underwritten by Horace Mann and ALPLM will enable 50 educators—one from each state—to travel to Illinois for a five-day institute in summer 2006. Half of the winning fellows

ILLUSTRATIONS/PHOTOS CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: OFFICE OF NAVAL RESEARCH, LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

will attend June 26–30, and half July 10–14. A $1,000 fellowship will cover travel expenses. The program is open to any full-time K–12 teacher. Applications must be submitted online no later than March 4, 2006.

Winners will be announced on National Teacher Day, May 9. For information on the application process, eligibility, and judging, go to **www.horacemann.com/educator-resources/abraham-lincoln-fellowship-feature.html**.

DEADLINE APPROACHING FOR MERCEDES-BENZ COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS

Students who are the first in their family to go to college can apply for scholarships from Mercedes-Benz. The Drive Your Future program will provide $10,000 ($2,500 per year for four years) to 100 high school seniors from across the country who demonstrate financial need coupled with exceptional academic achievement, leadership, and school and community involvement.

Fifty additional scholarships will be awarded to students in similar circumstances with an interest in pursuing a degree in performing arts, bringing the total awards value to $1.5 million dollars. But hurry—students must apply online by February 10, 2006.

For more information and to review the e-application, go to **www.mbusa.com/about/philanthropy/drive-your-future.do**.

LIBRARIES THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Have you and your library created initiatives that make you indispensable to your school? Do you significantly impact the students you serve?

The Giant Step program from Thomson Gale and *Library School Journal* recognizes outstanding school and public libraries that make significant improvements or create innovations in programs or services that have a positive impact on student development and learning.

The maximum award is $10,000, and the winning library (or libraries) will be honored during a celebration at the American Library Association's annual conference. School library media centers in the United States and Canada are eligible to apply (either individually or as a district-wide program).

Go to **www.galeschools.com/grant_goldmine/giant_award/about_giant.htm** for information and an application. The deadline for entries is February 15, 2006.

CALLING ALL MATH HEROES!

Do you stand and deliver? Do you—or someone you know—make great strides helping students understand and enjoy mathematics? Raytheon Company's MathMovesU Grants and Scholarships Program recognizes educators who inspire students by creating fun, challenging, and innovative learning environments.

Up to three awards of $2,500 each will be granted to recipients in each of the target markets where Raytheon has a presence (Arizona, California, District of Columbia, Florida, Indiana, Kansas, Massachusetts, and Texas); eight additional grants will be awarded outside of these target markets.

A matching award will go to the school where each recipient is employed, or to another math-related nonprofit organization of the recipient's choice.

Applicants must be nominated by students, other teachers, principals, parents, or school volunteers, and must teach full-time in a middle or high school in the United States. Applications must be received by February 15, 2006.

For information and an application, turn your Web browser to **www.mathmovesu.com/grants.html**.

FINDING THE RIGHT CANDIDATE ISN'T EASY...
WHY NOT HIRE AN AGENT?
Joe Smith
Principal seekin
position in K-1
education
AGENTK-12
WWW.AGENTK-12.ORG

ILLUSTRATIONS FROM TOP: MERCEDES-BENZ, ART EXPLOSION, GETTY IMAGES

Coming Soon to a Classroom Near You—

NEA's Read Across America!

Originally created as a one-day event to celebrate the joy of reading on March 2, Dr. Seuss's birthday, NEA's Read Across America has grown into a nationwide initiative that promotes reading every day of the year. This year's celebration brings resources to help you reach out to parents, teen readers, and the Hispanic community.

More than 45 million children, teens, and adults took part last year in NEA's Read Across America Day. Are you ready to make this year's event even bigger and better? The 2006 Resource Kit offers posters, ideas, and reproducible certificates and bookmarks. Go to **www.nea.org/readacross/resources/** to request your kit or to download the contents. Here's a sneak preview of what you'll find:

- **Reading Rocks! poster.** In this age of iPods and Game Boys, Webcasts and reality TV, can reading really hold its own among teens? The answer is *yes*—if you have the resources and support for teen literacy! Our *Reading Rocks!* poster has tips for getting teens excited about reading, Web sites with resources for teen readers, and a great tip sheet for hosting a teen poetry slam.
- **¡Lea con La NEA! poster.** As educators, you're always looking for resources to help your English-language learners do their best. Our *¡Lea con La NEA!* ("Read with NEA") poster includes tips in Spanish for parents to encourage their children to read, a reproducible Certificate of Participation, and Web sites for educators.

DON'T FORGET to pledge your participation! Tell us about your plans by going to **http://home.nea.org/readacross/raaedit.cfm**. You can also sign up to receive a free e-newsletter with the latest literacy news from NEA's Read Across America and our partners—just send a blank e-mail to **join-nea-raa-enewsletter@list.nea.org**.

THE AMBER SPYGLASS
CRISPIN
THE 20TH CENTURY CHILDREN'S BOOK TREASURY
Dr. Seuss
YOUR FAVORITE SEUSS

Heads Up from NEA Member Benefits

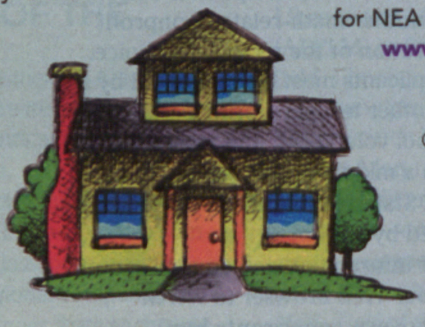
HOW MUCH 'HOUSE' CAN YOU AFFORD?

SPRING IS HOME-BUYING SEASON and now is a great time to take stock of your finances to see if you really have the funds to buy the house you want. Home affordability is determined by:

- **Monthly pre-tax income:** money from salary, investments, and other sources
- **Outstanding debt:** credit card, installment loan, and other monthly obligations
- **Borrowing power:** the amount a mortgage lender is willing to lend you.

Whether you are a first-time buyer or looking to "trade up," the NEA Home Financing Program® can help you find the answers.

For a no-obligation consultation, call **1-800-NEA-4-YOU** (1-800-632-4968). Be sure to ask about the complimentary "NEA Getaway" hotel package you'll receive after closing on a new mortgage or refinance.



A POLICY OF CARING

NEW! NEA PREMIER ACCIDENTAL DEATH INSURANCE PLAN
With no medical exam or medical questions to answer, it's a low-cost way to provide meaningful protection against accidental death—and ***acceptance is guaranteed*** for all eligible members up to age 70. Coverage ranges from $250,000 to $1,000,000. Rates start as low as $13.95 a month and won't ever increase because of your age or health.

For over 40 years, the NEA Members Insurance Trust® has been creating exclusive, economical life insurance products for NEA members. To learn more, visit us at **www.neamb.com/premier** today.

Coverage made available by Minnesota Life Insurance Company under policy form series 05-80114 and any of its state variations. Coverage not yet available in all states.

THE NEA MEMBERS AUTO & HOME INSURANCE PROGRAM OFFERS EXCLUSIVE, EDUCATOR-BASED RATES!

PHOTO/ILLUSTRATION CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: NEA, GETTY IMAGES

Take Note

Science Teachers: Test Drive A Biotechnology Magazine

Educators who are thinking about subscribing to classroom periodicals can download the fall 2005 issue of *Your World: Biotechnology & You*, a magazine written for grades 7–12.

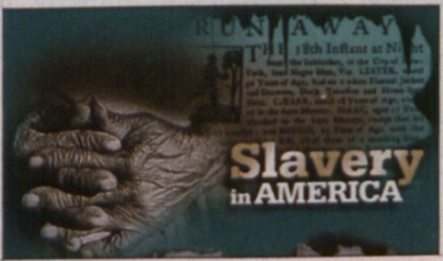
Biotechnology Institute is making the issue available free of charge to acquaint teachers and students with the magazine, which explores the science of biotechnology and its practical applications in health care, agriculture, industry, and the environment. A teacher's print subscription runs $49 annually and includes 30 copies of the magazine, published twice yearly in the fall and spring, plus online tips, companion resources, activities, and a teacher guide that links to National Science Education Standards. To download the free fall issue (which focuses on obesity), visit **www.biotechinstitute.org**.

YOUR WORLD
Biotechnology & You

The History of Slavery

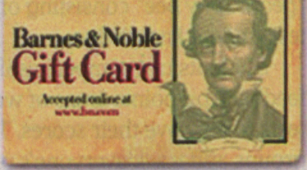
As a companion to the 2004 PBS series *Slavery in America*, New York Life has underwritten a Web site that chronicles the American institution of slavery, beginning in the 1600s through its abolishment in 1865 with the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution.

The site is replete with historical narratives, archival images, political cartoons, documents, maps, essays, biographies, booklists, literature resources, interactive exhibitions, an online encyclopedia, and most important, a comprehensive bank of lesson plans contributed by teachers across the country that explores topics from the Trans-Atlantic Passage to African-American naming conventions and the Atlantic migration of African foodstuffs. Go to **www.slaveryinamerica.org**.



Win a Barnes & Noble Gift Card

Attention bookstore lovers! NEA members can register for a chance to win one of three $100 Barnes & Noble gift cards. Use the card to escape winter doldrums with new reading material, CD-ROMs, or DVDs. The giveaway entry begins at 12 a.m. ET on **February 1, 2006** and ends at 11:59 p.m. ET on **February 28, 2006.** To register, go to the "Free Giveaways" area at the NEA Member Benefits Web site, **www.neamb.com**. No purchase is necessary to enter.



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You Are Here

Are your students geographically challenged? Do they know the continents, countries, rivers, mountains, and oceans that cover our planet?

The folks at A Broader View think geography is terrifically important, and they've created Geography Challenge, an online "geography bee" consisting of interactive puzzles and quizzes that test student knowledge.

Students can compete as individuals or join teams. Immediate feedback pinpoints areas of weaknesses, and students can retake tests to improve their scores. Teachers can create classroom groups and track everyone's progress.

Additional resources include geography fact pages and *The Geography Insider*, an online newsletter that features a different country in every issue.

Registration for Geography Challenge is free, however, the site does promote its retail products—maps, globes, atlases, puzzles, and games designed to get kids excited about geography. To register, visit **www.geographyzone.com**.

Help Our Soldiers Stay in Touch

You can help U.S. service men and women phone home by participating in Cell Phones for Soldiers (CPFS), a program that converts old cell phones to cash and buys calling cards for military personnel stationed overseas.

Started from small beginnings by teens Brittany and Robbie Bergquist of Norwell, Massachusetts (they cracked open their piggy banks and convinced friends to part with snack money to the tune of $21), the program has raised more than $800,000 and distributed nearly 40,000 calling cards to soldiers stationed in Iraq, Kuwait, Afghanistan, and elsewhere.

Their efforts have attracted a lot of attention. The Bergquist family—parents Gail and Robert are both veteran teachers and NEA members—has been profiled in *Money Magazine*, and *Teen People* named Brittany one of just 20 teens who will change the world.

> "You have helped me out so much in a time of need. I really appreciate it. The communication that I keep with my loved ones is the only thing that keeps me sane around here...
>
> I'm not very good at letter writing, but I wanted to say these few words with a deep thanks."
>
> *—From a soldier*

Your school can help the Bergquists reach their goal of raising $9 million by becoming a drop-off point for used cell phones, chargers, batteries, accessories, PDAs, and pagers.

It's easy to organize—go to the Web site at **www.cellphonesforsoldiers.com** for more information and instructions on how to get started.

DIVERSITY CALENDAR

FEBRUARY

FEBRUARY—BLACK HISTORY MONTH
This month we honor the history and achievements of Black Americans. Visit *African-American Odyssey* at http://rs6.loc.gov/ammem/aaohtml/exhibit/aointro.html, an introduction to the collections spanning slavery to civil rights at the Library of Congress.

FEBRUARY 14—VALENTINE'S DAY
Some believe this observance dates from the Roman feast of Lupercalia, but it has also been used by some Christians to honor St. Valentine, a martyred bishop. Today, many take the time to show affection to people they care about. Find lots of ideas for making valentines at http://familyfun.go.com/arts-and-crafts/season/special feature/valentines_cards_ms/.

FEBRUARY 15—NIRVANA DAY
Celebrated by Buddhists, this day commemorates the death of the Buddha at age 80, when, having attained enlightenment, he pased into the realm of perfect peace. Also known as Parinirvana and observed by some on February 8 and 13.

FEBRUARY 28—SHROVE TUESDAY
Also known as Fat Tuesday (the day before Lent), when the Finnish feast on pea soup and buns filled with cream and almond paste. Recipes for both are at www.finnguide.fi/calendar/shrovrec.asp. Combine this activity with a metrics lesson, as you'll have to convert the measurements!

MARCH

MARCH—WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH
This observance evolved from the National Women's History Project and honors the histories and contributions of women. The National Parks Service has created an online itinerary of historic places associated with prominent American women, including Amelia Earhart, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, Clara Barton, and many others. Includes links to lesson plans. Go to www.cr.nps.gov/nr/feature/wom/.

MARCH—IRISH AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH
Erin go bragh! A time to remember the many ways America is enriched and strengthened by contributions from people of Irish heritage.

MARCH 8—INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY
Honoring working women everywhere, this day is also the anniversary of the historic 1857 garment and textile workers' strike in New York, one of the first organized actions by women anywhere.

MARCH 10—HARRIET TUBMAN'S DEATH
Born into slavery, Tubman freed herself and dedicated her life to freeing others and advancing the rights of Blacks and women. Read a short biography at www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4p1535.html.

MARCH 20—FIRST DAY OF SPRING
It's the vernal equinox in the northern hemisphere, when days grow long and life and warmth return to the land.

The tom joyner Foundation

Get prepared at one of these 7 campuses:

Clark Atlanta University, Atlanta, GA
Bowie State University, Bowie, MD
Jackson State University, Jackson, MS
Johnson C. Smith University, Charlotte, NC
Cheyney State University, Cheyney, PA
Tennessee State University, Nashville, TN
Harris-Stowe State College, St. Louis, MO

NEA & Tom Joyner Foundation

Hey Teachers—Get Certified!

$700,000 Scholarship Program

The Foundation and the National Education Association believe that pre-K through 12 curriculum should be taught by licensed teachers. We recognize that in certain urban, suburban, and rural communities not every teacher is licensed. In an effort to help teachers become fully licensed, the Foundation and NEA have agreed to join forces to assist teachers who desire to gain full licensure.

The Foundation and NEA are offering financial assistance in the following areas:

- Tuition for specified courses
- Books
- Support for preparing to take a state teacher licensure examination

To be eligible for this program you must be currently employed as a teacher in a K-12 public school, or currently enrolled in an accredited school of education and have completed course work for licensure. Scholarship winners must commit to teach a minimum of three years in identified communities, to be locally determined.

Scholarships will be made through Historically Black Colleges and Universities in selected areas throughout the United States. If you are interested in participating in this program, please go to **www.nea.org/joyner** and fill out the attached short questionnaire, and we will determine your eligibility and an appropriate local HBCU for you to work through.

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www.nea.org/joyner

2.7 Million Minds

are Better than One

Get great ideas for teaching and classroom management from the best in the business — educators like you!

NEA's free Works4Me weekly e-newsletter brings you fresh, creative thoughts and insights about:

- teaching techniques
- curriculum content
- organization
- peer and student relationships
- technology

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On TV

AFRICAN-AMERICAN LIVES

PBS, February 1 & 8, 9–11 p.m. ET. Check local listings.

The lives considered here are those of accomplished African-Americans: a neurosurgeon, an astronaut, a sociologist, and a movie star. But the emphasis is on the past, as Dr. Henry Louis Gates Jr., joins geneology experts to trace each subject's lineage through American history, all the way to Africa.

BONHOEFFER: AGENT OF GRACE

PBS, February 6, 10 p.m. ET. Check local listings.

In another time, Dietrich Bonhoeffer might have been remembered as an ecumenical organizer or for his theological writings—but during World War II the Protestant scholar found himself a leader in the small Nazi resistance movement in his native Germany. "We are the silent witnesses of evil deeds," he wrote. "Will our inward power of resistance be strong enough to find our way back?" Imprisoned for helping Jews escape to Switzerland, Bonhoeffer was hanged in 1945. For more information, visit www.pbs.org/opb/bonhoeffer.

COLONIAL AMERICA

Discovery Channel, February 7, 5 a.m. ET/PT.

This program explores the formation of the American colonies, difficulties of colonial life in Jamestown, Virginia, and the history behind the famed Salem Witch Trials. You can tape and use in the classroom for one year.

NICK NEWS WITH LINDA ELLERBEE: DO WE NEED BLACK HISTORY MONTH?

Nickelodeon, February 8 & 24, 6 a.m. ET/PT.

Watch a lively discussion on Black History Month and the importance of teaching Black history in this episode of the popular TV news magazine for grades 4–6.

SAVE OUR HISTORY: VOICES OF CIVIL RIGHTS

History Channel, February 13, 6 a.m. ET/PT.

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Listen to the story of the Civil Rights Movement through compelling personal narratives. This series is a national history education and preservation initiative that raises awareness and support for preserving local heritage. Tape it and use in your classroom for two years. For more information visit www.historychannel.com/classroom/voices/.

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Reading Content Coach K-3,
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JULY '64

PBS, February 14, 10 p.m. ET. Check local listings.

In 1964, a three-night riot erupted in two Black neighborhoods in Rochester, New York—the culmination of decades of poverty, joblessness, and racial discrimination. Using archival footage and interviews with eyewitnesses, this show explores the genesis and outcome of three devastating nights in the Civil Rights era.

CONCEPTS IN GEOMETRY AND MEASUREMENT

Discovery Channel, February 15, 5 a.m. ET/PT.

This episode, "Coordinate Geometry," examines the uses of math during the Age of Exploration and looks at practical applications for coordinate geometry, with segments on archaeology, polar coordinates, space exploration, and the inner workings of computers. Tape and use in the classroom for one year.

TLC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: UNDERSTANDING GOOD CITIZENSHIP

TLC, February 24, 6 a.m., ET/PT.

From the series for K–8, this episode explores the concept of citizenship in a democracy, including who qualifies as a citizen, how to become one, rights and responsibilities, and selection of leaders. Tape and use in class for two years.

MODERN MARVELS: GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER TECH

History Channel, February 27, 6 a.m., ET/PT.

Part of a series examining structures and innovations around the globe, this segment explores the life and work of the African-American visionary inventor. Tape and use in your classroom for two years. Teaching materials are available at www.historychannel.com/classroom.

On TV listings are provided by KIDSNET, a national resource for children's media in Washington, D.C., www.kidsnet.org, and by Cable in the Classroom's Access Learning *magazine at www.ciconline.org.*

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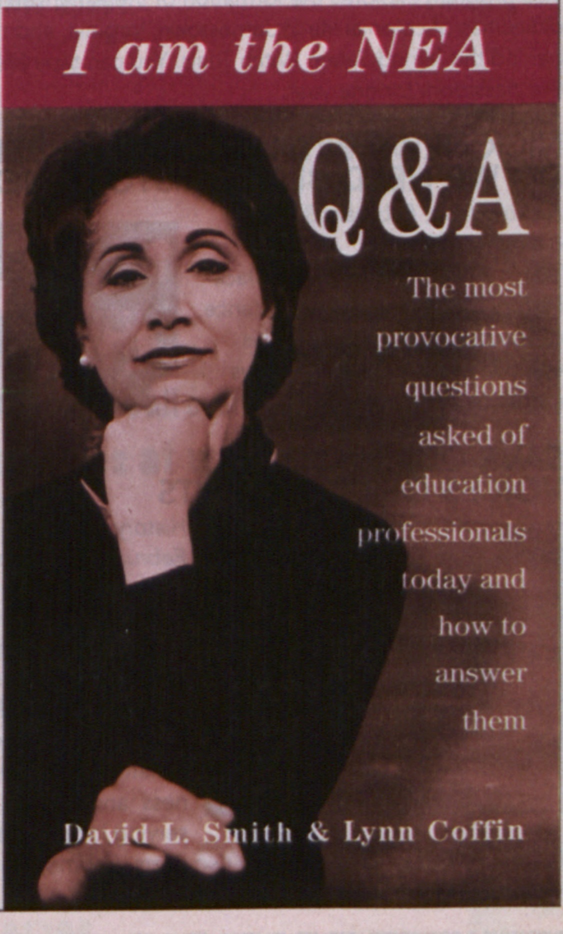


I am the NEA

Q&A

The most provocative questions asked of education professionals today and how to answer them

David L. Smith & Lynn Coffin

On the Web

SCIENCE LESSONS AVAILABLE ONLINE

Teachers from across the country have teamed up with the Space Foundation to develop a comprehensive bank of more than 200 science lesson plans for students in PreK–12. Divided by grade level, the lessons focus on space, science, math, engineering, and technology, and indicate which national science standards they meet. Included are timelines, background materials, extensions, resources, and evaluation and assessment criteria. To access the entire bank, register for free at **www.sciencestandardslessons.org.**

THE LIFE AQUATIC

Teachers and students interested in marine studies can access free or low-cost information and resources at the University of Delaware's Graduate College of Marine Studies Web site. Offerings include curriculum materials, marine life fact sheets, online videos and presentations, information about marine careers, and online explorations that track actual marine expeditions. Wonderful graphics. Go to **www.ocean.udel.edu/public/teacher.html.**

UNDERSTANDING THE SUPREME COURT

Educators with an interest in the United States Supreme Court can get an early-bird look at a companion Web site to the upcoming PBS series (still to be named) about the history, character, and drama of our nation's highest court. The series will debut in fall 2006, but portions of the Web site are functional now, and include essays, images, interactive exercises, personal histories, and lesson plans about the search for justice within the American judicial system and the arm of government constitutionally equal to the Presidency and Congress. Underwritten by New York Life. Go to **www.historyofsupremecourt.org.**

ECONOMICS FOR THE REAL WORLD

As an area of study, economics sometimes gets short shrift. The National Council on Economic Education seeks to meet the need for resources with EconEdLink, a Web site that focuses on K–12 teaching materials and strategies, including model lessons and templates for creating effective lesson plans on your own. Visitors can also find information on current events, the latest economic news, macroeconomic data for classroom use, primary source materials, charts, simulations, and links to related materials. Go to **www.econedlink.org.**

BOOKS BY NEA MEMBERS

RAYMOND CARVER IN THE CLASSROOM: 'A SMALL, GOOD THING'

By Susanne Rubenstein

Few writers have the gift for speaking so directly to young people as Raymond Carver, the "father of American minimalism." In this introduction to his life and works, the author, a high school English teacher and essayist, shows how she uses Carver to help students draw inspiration from his sometimes troubled life and become better writers by making connections between his poetry and fiction and their own. 117 pp. $18.95, National Council of Teachers of English. To order, call 800-369-6283.

Raymond Carver in the Classroom
"A Small, Good Thing"

THE BIRDS AT MY BARN

By Kathleen Hardcastle Moeller

"Early this morning, I went to our barn. A wren had built a nest in the horse's old blanket. Her nest was as round as a little bowl." In this gentle picture book for early readers, a child spends a day discovering the birds that make their homes in or near his family's barn. Besides the wren, he finds cardinals, sparrows, mockingbirds, and more in this tale written by a classroom teacher and illustrated with watercolors. 17 pp. $5 from Richard C. Owen Publishers. To order, visit www.rcowen.com.

The Birds at My Barn

THE BIG BOOK OF BOY STUFF

By Bart King

This book has everything you ever (and possibly never!) wanted to know about entertaining boys—from the sublime (roasting marshmallows with solar power) to the ridiculous (practical jokes, burping) to that which defies categorization ("ferrets in history"). The author, a middle-school science teacher, leaves no stone unturned in his quest to document the things that boys love. Brimming with arcana and practical advice, it's a great way to get boys reading. Ages 8–14, 292 pp. $19.95 from Gibbs Smith, Publisher, www.gibbs-smith.com.

THE
BIG BOOK OF BOY STUFF
BART KING

KIDS QUILT TOGETHER: THE ABCs OF GROUP QUILTS

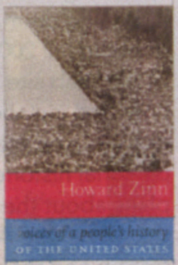
By Kathy Emmel

Yes, you *can* teach children to quilt—the secret is organization and preparation. Filled with insight, advice, and suggestions for linking to curriculum, this how-to manual by a veteran teacher and needlewoman provides all the information and inspiration you need to help your students create a memorable group quilt. Generously illustrated with gorgeous color photographs. 96 pp. $24.95 from C&T Publishing, www.ctpub.com.

kids Quilt Together
The ABCs of Group Quilts
Kathy Emmel

In Print

AMERICAN HISTORY, UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL



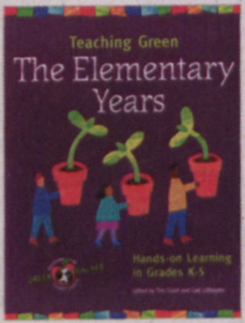
Spanning more than 500 years, Howard Zinn's ***Voices of a People's History of the United States*** presents stories that history often overlooks—those of women, people of color, Native Americans, workers, and others who struggle for equality and justice. Through speeches, letters, poems, and songs in this comprehensive historical survey they are at last given a voice. 665 pp. $18.95 from Seven Stories Press. Go to www.sevenstories.com.

THE REAL STORY OF ROSA PARKS

Herbert Kohl
She Would Not Be Moved

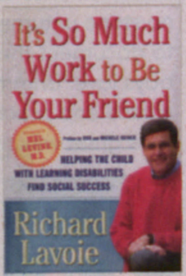
The recent death of Rosa Parks has unleashed a spate of remembrances—but how many are accurate? In ***She Would Not Be Moved: How We Tell the Story of Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus Boycott,*** author Herbert Kohl contends that framing Parks' actions as merely those of a tired woman ignores her bravery and commitment to political activism. Kohl aims to set the record straight in this study of the people, events, and groundwork that led to Parks' momentous decision on a city bus. Includes a teacher's guide and extensive resource list. 126 pp. $22.95 from The New Press. Go to www.thenewpress.com.

TOWARD A KINDER, GREENER WORLD



For teachers looking to incorporate environmental studies into their curriculum, ***Teaching Green—The Elementary Years: Hands-on Learning in Grades K–5*** offers grade-appropriate strategies and project ideas to foster green appreciation. Editors Tim Grant and Gail Littlejohn compile background information on environmental issues with practical instructions and activities that address a range of topics. 256 pp. $29.95 from New Society Publishers. To order, visit www.greenteacher.com.

PLEASE BE MY FRIEND


It's So Much Work to Be Your Friend
HELPING THE CHILD WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES FIND SOCIAL SUCCESS
Richard Lavoie

Whether meeting for a playdate in kindergarten or hanging out in the high school cafeteria, students with learning disabilities are especially vulnerable to rejection. Author Richard Lavoie suggests ways to help children whose social skills are suffering in ***It's So Much Work to Be Your Friend: Helping the Child with Learning Disabilities Find Social Success.*** Besides pointers on how to spot a learning disability, Lavoie discusses how a disability can affect a child's social development and offers strategies that teachers and parents can use to help children transform self-defeating behaviors. 359 pp. $25 from Simon and Schuster. To order, visit www.simonsays.com.

AND NOTHING WAS EVER THE SAME

Once Upon an Ordinary School Day
Colin McNaughton Satoshi Kitamura

On a gray, ordinary morning, a boy wakes up and prepares for another ho-hum day, but nothing can prepare him for the revolution about to take place in his class. Along with an old Victrola, the new teacher brings a key that will unlock the boy's imagination. In ***Once Upon an Ordinary School Day*** by Colin McNaughton and Satoshi Kitamura, the children in Mr. Gee's class learn that music makes pictures in their heads, and that writing about the pictures gives their stories flight. Ages 4–8. 24 pp. $16 from Farrar Straus Giroux. Go to www.fsgkidsbooks.com.

I'M NOT CRAZY—IT'S EVERYONE ELSE!

The world can be perplexing when you're a 10-year-old with ADHD. Rainy Tucker tries to pay attention to grownups and rules, but it's hard to stay focused. ***Rainy*** by Sis Deans presents a sweet, sunny girl with an endless supply of energy that sometimes takes her where she doesn't want to go. Left at camp for the summer, Rainy must negotiate tricky friendships and stay out of trouble, while remaining true to herself. Ages 9–12. 191 pp. $16.95 from Henry Holt and Company. To order visit www.henryholtchildrensbooks.com.

GETTING TO KNOW YOU, GETTING TO KNOW ME

Funerals & Fly Fishing

To the legions of fictional boys struggling through adolescence, add Brad Stanislawski. As the new kid with an unpronounceable name who towers over his shorter classmates, Brad doesn't see how things can get worse, but in Mary Bartek's ***Funerals & Fly Fishing*** he's about to find out. Unforeseen circumstances ruin Brad's summer, and he's sent to stay with a grandfather he's never met—and who, Brad is horrified to discover, runs a funeral parlor. He also loves to fish, and through this shared pleasure they move tentatively toward friendship. Ages 9–12. 148 pp. $16.95 from Henry Holt and Company, www.henryholtchildrensbooks.com.

BRING OUT THE BEST IN YOUR PRESCHOOLERS

Preschool Classroom Management
150 Teacher-Tested Techniques
Laverne Warner and Sharon Anne Lynch

Laverne Warner and Sharon Anne Lynch, professors of early and special education, provide strategies for addressing behavioral issues before and after they arise in ***Preschool Classroom Management: 150 Teacher-Tested Techniques.*** The authors address 150 issues and their solutions, with advice on how to foster communication that allows children to make good decisions, have positive interactions, and learn more effectively. Useful for those both new to early education and those more experienced. 224 pp. $24.95 from Gryphon House. To order, go to www.gryphonhouse.com.

MARKETPLACE feb'06

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Why Work?

Easy online credits undermine the intellectual rigor of our high schools.

BY LAURA PREBLE

As someone who loves books and language, I felt a bit intimidated and excited about taking on the class that no one at my school wanted: make-up English, or, as I euphemistically referred to it, Opportunity English. My challenge: to inspire 48 seniors who've failed English once, probably don't like the subject, and need the credit to graduate.

I began full of optimism and determination to make this class as interesting, relevant, and rigorous as any I have ever taught. The fact that they absolutely had to pass this class should at least ensure my students' participation, I reasoned.

Of course, I was wrong. Six weeks in, fully one-third were failing simply because they didn't do the work.

I met with counselors to warn them that these kids were risking their diplomas; I talked to the kids individually and to their parents, to try to forestall a spring full of tears, wailing, and gnashing of teeth.

As it turns out, I needn't have worried. One of my least enthusiastic students, a girl I'll call Alice, came to me six weeks before school was over to let me know she'd dropped her other English class, so she'd probably be able to pass mine.

"IF YOU HAVE $100, ...you can trade in your C or D grade in English for an A, and you won't even have to break an intellectual sweat to do it."

"But don't you need the credit for that one too?" I asked.

"Oh, don't worry," was her reply. "I'm doing an online school."

I'd never heard this before, but then several other students told me the same thing, so I consulted a counselor who told me that this correspondence school was an option for "kids who don't have any other options." I was assured that it was used only in extenuating circumstances.

Apparently, those circumstances included not doing work in your regular high school, because several students were suddenly relieved to find that they would, in fact, be graduating with their friends even though they'd blown off a major core class all semester.

This bothered me; why should I make myself crazy trying to get these kids to work hard, to learn, to think, if they could simply pay a fee and do some mountain of paperwork in a correspondence school?

Two weeks later, Alice asked if I could read over something she'd done for her correspondence class because she wanted to be sure she'd done it right. She handed me a worksheet on which she had to underline topic sentences.

"So, is this what you're getting semester credit in senior English for?" I asked incredulously.

Alice said she felt bad, actually, because the work was so easy. She offered to bring the packet to me so I could see it.

What I saw made me angry, frustrated, and sad. Her packet consisted of eight worksheets. One was on capitalization. One was on comma use. One was on topic sentences. As Alice put it, "this is stuff I did in elementary school."

Something is wrong with this system. This girl's diploma reads that she got an A in senior English (as a transfer credit, but the transcript doesn't say where the transfer came from).

So, the message here is that if you have $100 and you want to pay for it, you can trade in your C or D grade in English for an A, and you won't even have to break an intellectual sweat to do it.

In our panic to make sure we leave no child behind, we're dragging them along without giving them the proper tools to succeed.

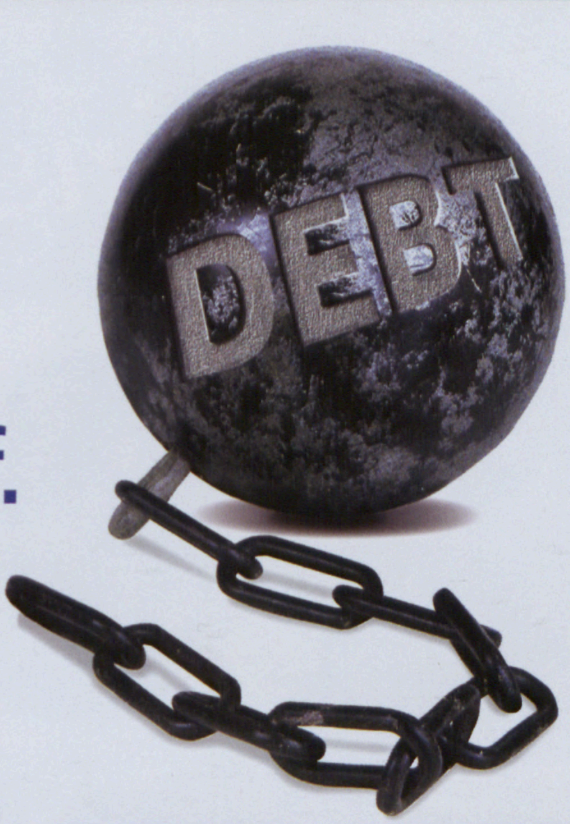
I checked online and found hundreds of these schools. At my high school, these courses appear on your transcript as a transfer credit from the other school. If that school's name sounds legitimate, which college will ask whether this is a correspondence school or a brick-and-mortar school with teachers and standards and rigorous work?

I take some comfort from the fact that Alice had a conscience, and knew that, despite her lack of interest in school, it just wasn't right that she get credit without working for it.

It's too bad the educational system doesn't feel that same sense of shame.

Laura Preble teaches English at West Hills High School in Santee, California, near San Diego. She's also a writer, singer, and former band leader.

PHOTO: FRED GREAVES



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$10,000	$463	$319	$248	$205	$177	N/A
$15,000	$694	$479	$371	$307	$265	$234
$25,000	N/A	$797	$618	$512	$441	$390

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MBNA PLATINUM PLUS
4000 1234 5678 9010
RICHARD O CROSWELL
WorldPoints
VISA

This Introductory APR applies only to cash advance checks and balance transfers, and may end sooner if your account is paid late. For retail purchases, you'll also enjoy a great low APR right from the start. Please note that payments are applied first to balances with the lowest APR.

You can now save when you use it to pay off your high-interest accounts.

Apply for yours today and receive:

- No annual fee
- Choice of rewards: Travel, Cash or Merchandise
- Rewards starting at just 2,500 points
- One point for every net retail purchase dollar you spend[◆]
- No limit to the points you can earn each year

So call today to get your card with many special members-only features and a great low APR!

nea Member Benefits

mbna

www.neamb.com

Call 1-888-758-7946, priority code **L0J8**.

For information about the rates, fees, other costs and benefits associated with the use of the NEA WorldPoints Platinum Plus and NEA WorldPoints School Days credit card; or to apply, call the telephone number appearing above or visit www.neamb.com.

[†] The Variable Annual Percentage Rate (APR) for Purchases, Balance Transfers, Cash Advance Checks, Bank and ATM Cash Advances is currently 9.99% for NEA WorldPoints Platinum Plus accounts, or 16.99% for NEA WorldPoints School Days accounts. The account you receive is based on creditworthiness. The current Introductory APR for Balance Transfers and Cash Advance Checks is 0% for your first 12 billing cycles. Transaction fee for Cash Advances and for purchases of wire transfers and other cash equivalents is 2% (min. $2, max. $30). Transaction fees are waived on balance transfers requested with your application. The Introductory APR may end before the advertised expiration date if your payment is late.

The Variable APRs for your account may change in accordance with the Variable-Rate Information accompanying your card. In addition, APRs, fees, and other terms of the account may change at any time, and when required by applicable law, we will send a notice to you when we make these changes.

If your account has balances with different APRs, payments are applied to the balance with the lowest APR before any payments are applied to balances with higher APRs. This means that balances with higher APRs are not reduced until balances with lower APRs are paid off.

The number of days between your statement Closing Date and your Payment Due Date (the grace period) may vary from one Billing Cycle to another.

[◆] **WORLDPOINTS REWARDS.** Minimum redemption levels: 25,000 for air; 5,000 for cash; and 2,500 for merchandise. Air rewards subject to maximum dollar value and special air arrangements require payment of additional points and a processing fee. Earn unlimited points. Earn 1 point per dollar of new net retail purchases charged to the card each month. Point earnings are rounded to the nearest whole point. Cash advances, balance transfers, purchase of money orders or other cash equivalents, out-of-network payments made though Bill Pay Choice℠, purchases made by or for a business or for a business purpose, and unauthorized/fraudulent transactions do not earn points. Points valid for 5 years. Air rewards from AK, HI, or PR limited to mainland U.S. unless fare paid to U.S. gateway. Points and/or rewards may not be combined with other discount or reward programs. Online merchandise catalog has widest selection of rewards; abridged catalog mailed upon request. Cash reward check expires 90 days after date of issue. Cash rewards not transferable. Other significant terms apply. Program subject to change. For more information visit mbnaworldpoints.com. Details accompany new account materials.

The NEA Credit Card Program® has been developed for NEA members and their families only. Eligible NEA family members include parents, spouse or domestic partner, and children. If a member decides not to renew membership, that person and his/her family will no longer be eligible to receive the preferred rates, fees and special promotions offered through the NEA Credit Card Program. If eligible, a replacement card will be offered. Any account opened in response to this offer will be governed by the laws of Delaware.

The NEA is not involved in the credit decision process; standard credit procedure is followed. All applications will be subject to a confidential standard review by MBNA America.

Absolutely NO membership dues are used to market this program.

MBNA America Bank, N.A. is the issuer and administrator of this credit card program. The WorldPoints program is managed in part by Carlson Companies, Inc., and its affiliates, including Carlson Travel Group, a travel agency registered to do business in California (Reg. No. 2036509-50), and other states, as required. The information about the costs of the cards described in this application was accurate as of 11/2005. The information may have changed. To find out what may have changed, please call (888) 758-7946. TTY users please call (800) 833-6262.

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